宗像教授異考録

Munakata Kyouju Ikouroku

第十一集

BIG COMICS SPECIAL

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星野之宣

Yukinobu Hoshino Presents

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星野之宣

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古代中国の不思議な言い伝えに、扶桑伝説がある。
東方海上に、まるでジャックと豆の木のような巨大な桑の木が
生えている島があったというのだが、これは日本のことだったら…
お稲荷さんという赤い鳥居に塗られ鏡がつきもの…いったいなぜ？
その謎を追究する過程で、宗像を襲った家族の悲劇が浮き彫りになっていき…
突然開けた館の奥から観音が現れる姿を表現した伝説和尚とは…
日本で最も奇怪な仏像といえる、それに秘められた伝説和尚とは…
東亜文化大学教授・宗像伝奇が開かされし歴史の真実の扉を開く。

宗像教

THE MUNAKATA CULT

Munakata Kyouju

Ikouro

BIG COMICS SPECIAL

THE CASE RECORDS OF PROFESSOR MUNAKATA

宗像教授異考録

Collection 11

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CHAPTER 33: THE LEGEND OF FUSANG

In "The Classic of Mountains and Seas", the oldest geographical document of China, there is a record of a mulberry tree called "Fusang", standing three hundred ri high, and growing beyond the Eastern Sea, and that the sun comes forth from it.

At its roots is the Kingdom of Fusang. There, the people eat mulberry leaves, make clothes and roofs from mulberry bark, and possess their own unique writing.

宗像教授異考録 11

Researchers excavated a bronze "Giant Tree", which, though incomplete, stood nearly four meters, from Sanxingdui Ruins in Sichuan, which has garnered attention recently. There is a high chance that this represents Fusang.

And it was the Japanese that came to think that this Fusang of the Eastern Sea, which had been believed in for thousands of years, referred to their own country.

They may have eschewed the derogatory name "Wa", believing that Fusang, the place of the rising sun, was a more fitting name for their land.

How-ever...

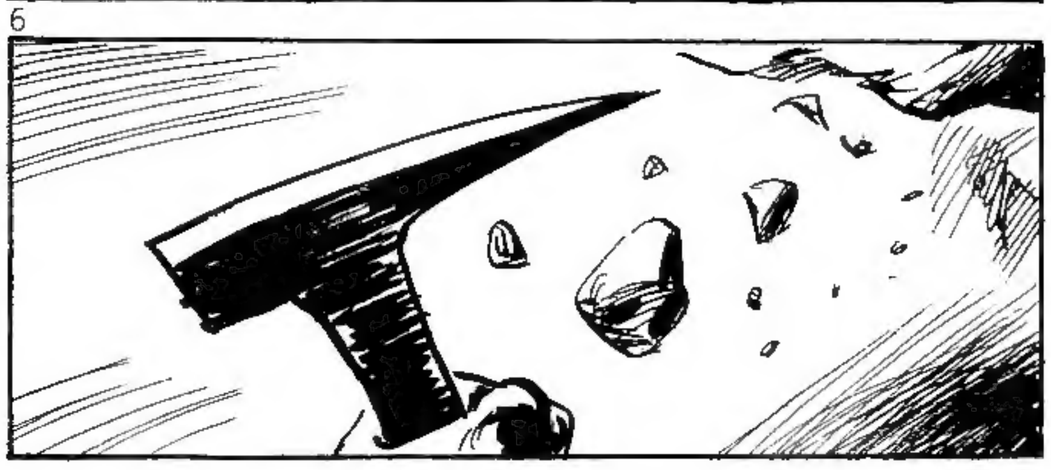
If Japan was the Kingdom of Fusang, that meant the tree had to exist there, as well.

SIGN: FUSO RYAKKI

This is why that name is still used for places and corporations today, even though the nation itself is called by the name of "Japan".

宗像教授異考録 11

Perhaps they believed that somewhere on the Japanese archipelago, there stood a mulberry tree hundreds of meters tall...



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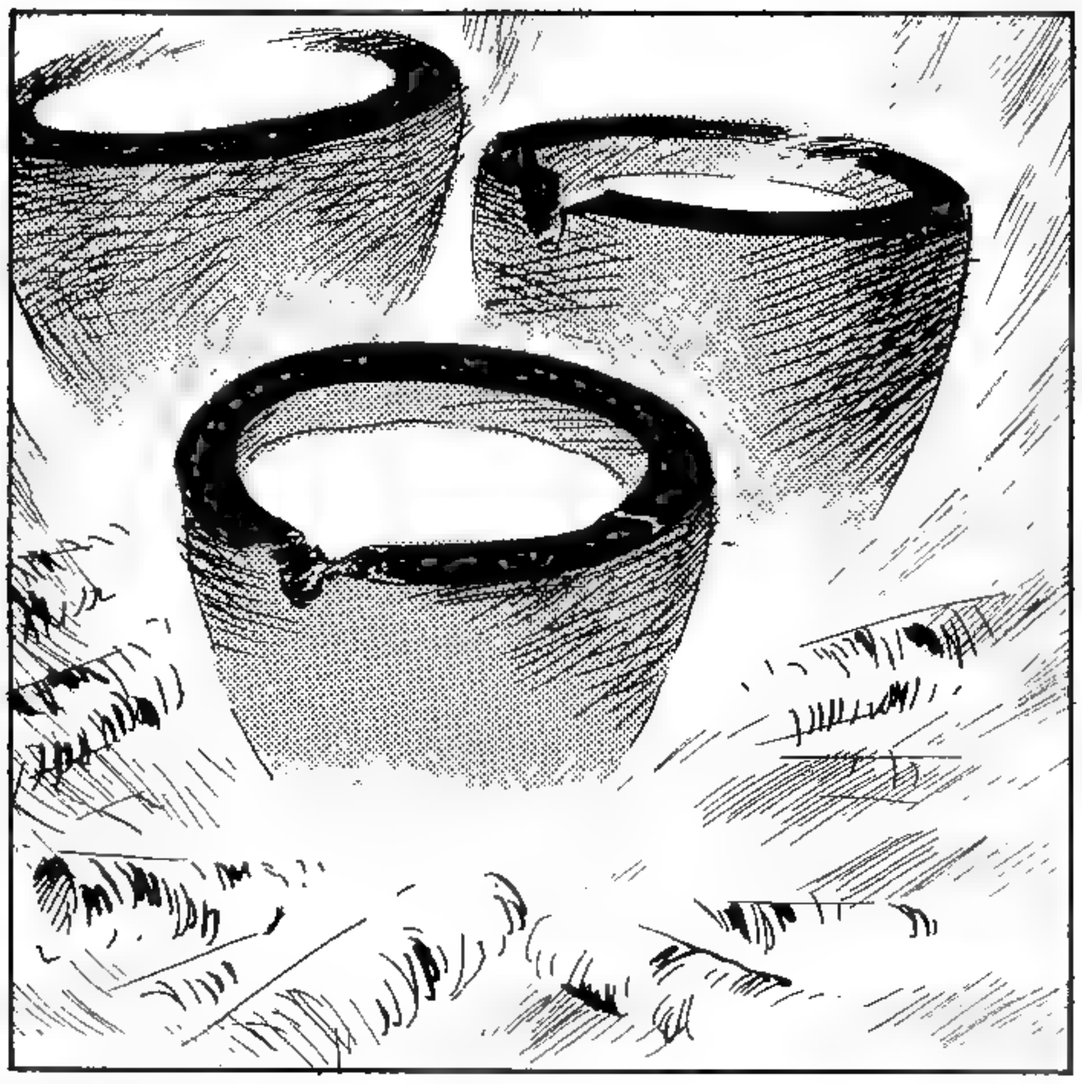

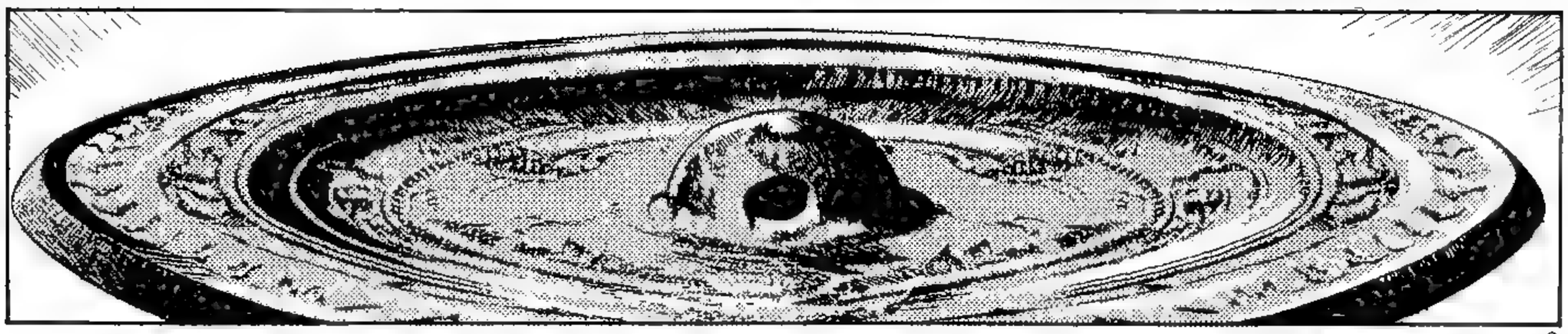

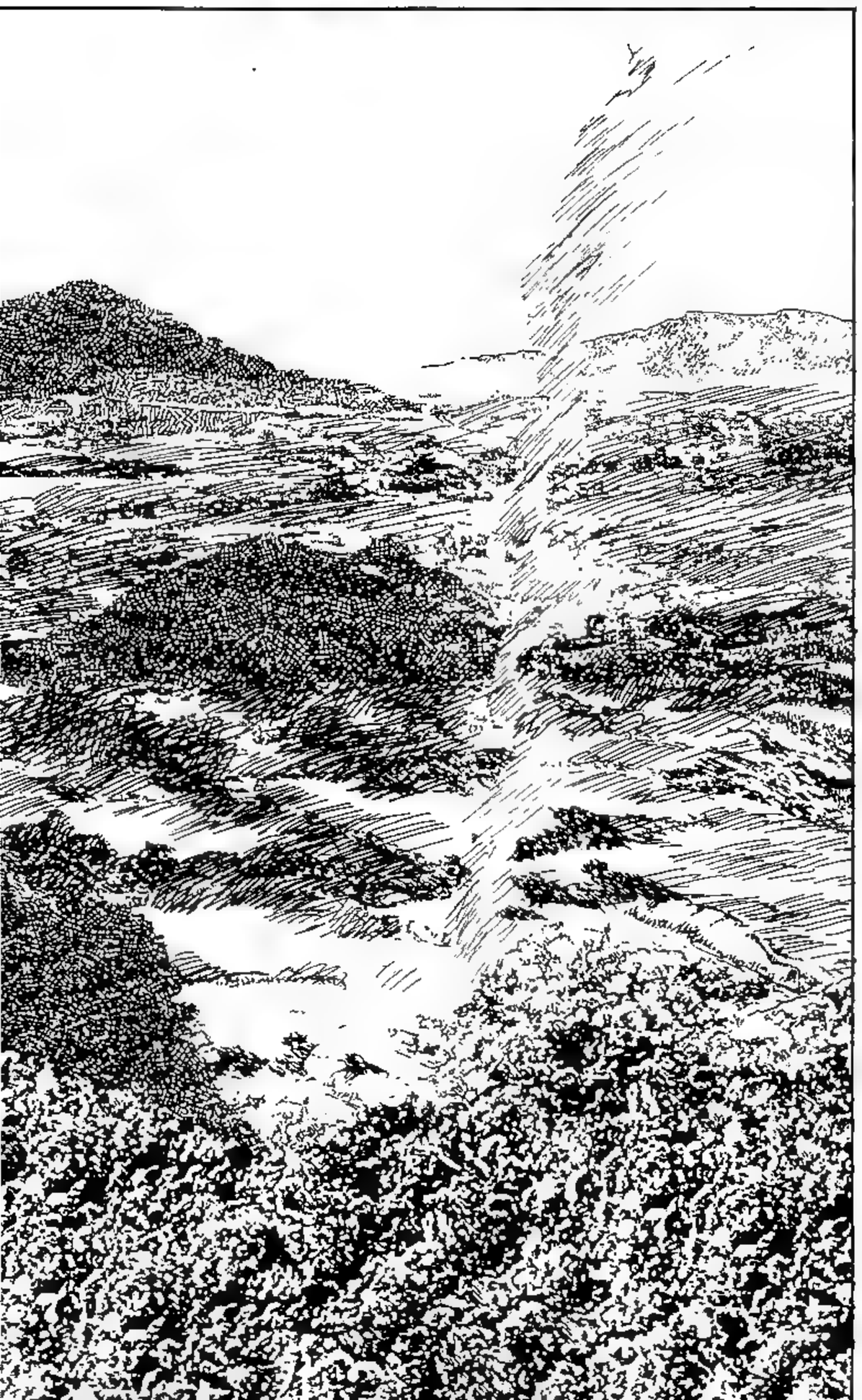

SIGN:
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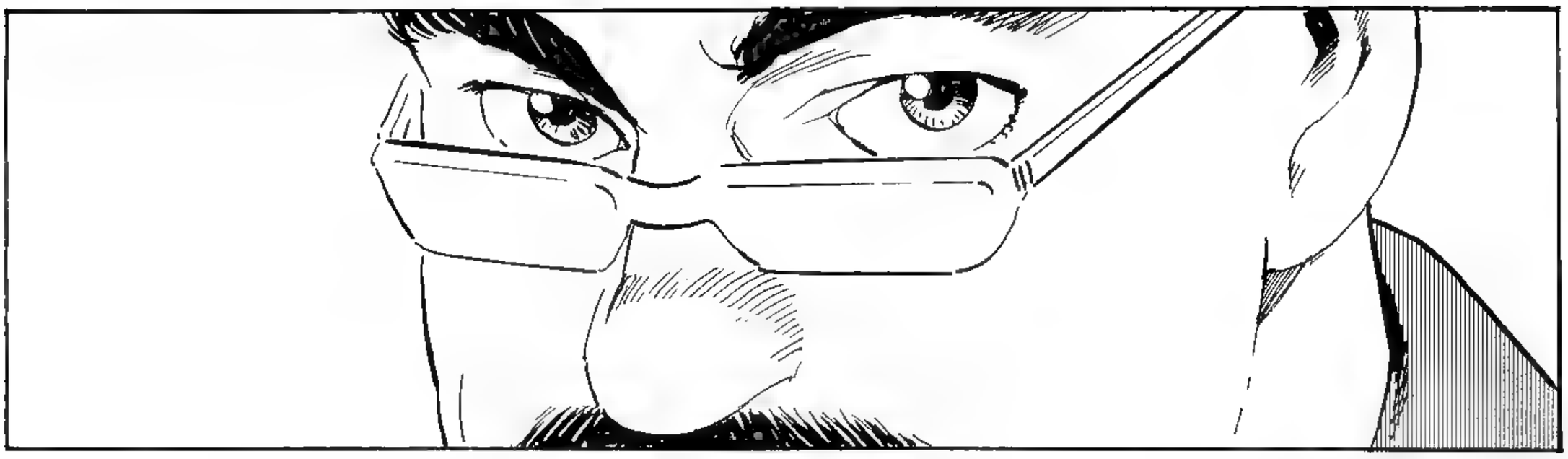
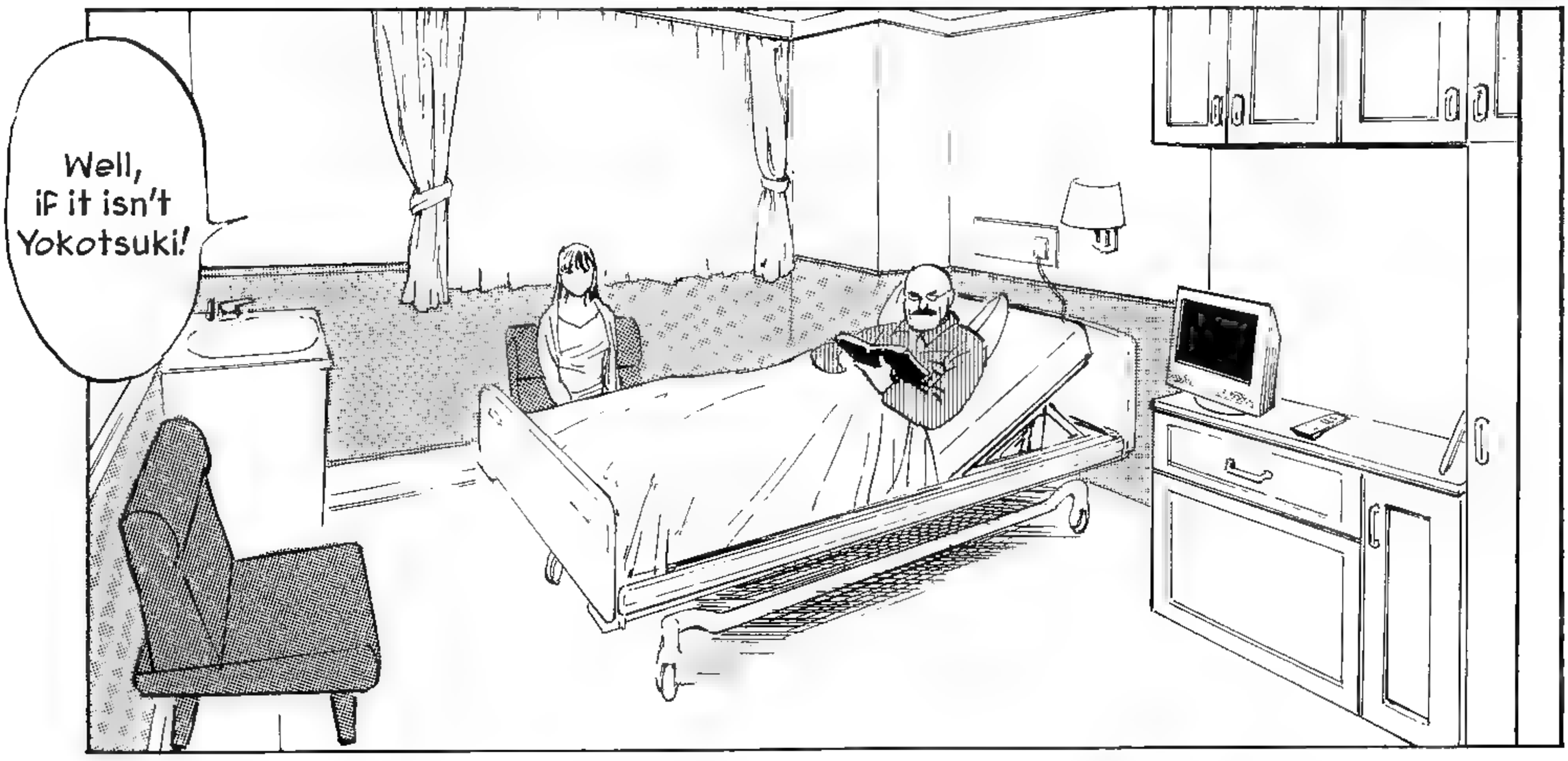
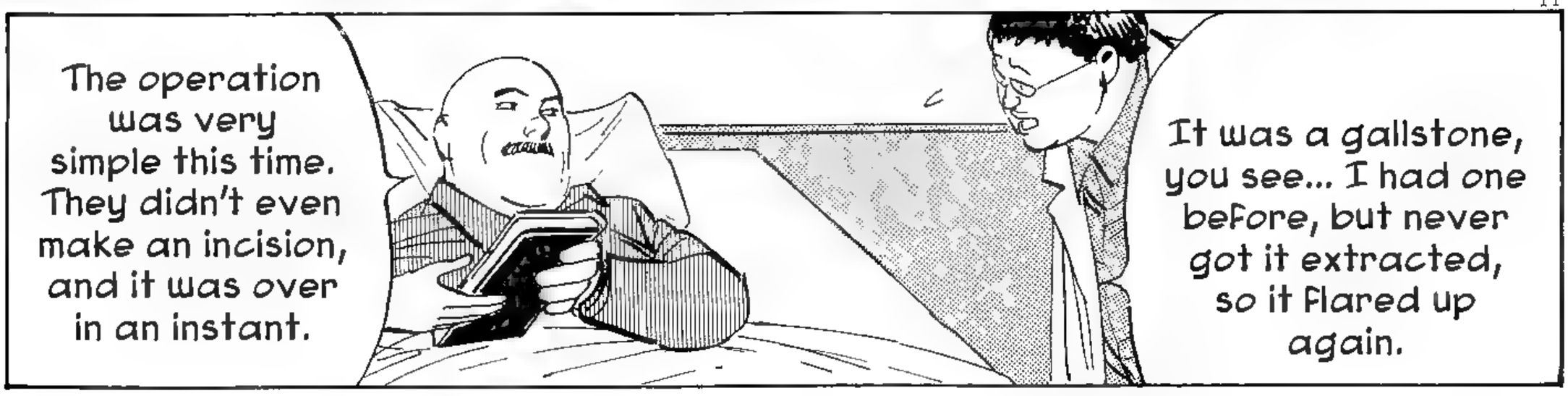



Well, if it isn't Yokotsuki!

He had it done yesterday. He'll be free to go tomorrow.

H...How was the operation? Are you alright, Professor Munakata !?


The operation was very simple this time. They didn't even make an incision, and it was over in an instant.
It was a gallstone, you see... I had one before, but never got it extracted, so it flared up again.

I'M TALKING ABOUT THE ONE FOR "BIG LITERATURE'S" SPECIAL ROMANCE EDITION! YOUR MANUSCRIPT ON "TRAVELLING THE LEGENDS"!

Here, have a seat.

T...Thanks. Now with all that said, you do realize that it's been a week past the deadline, right, Professor?

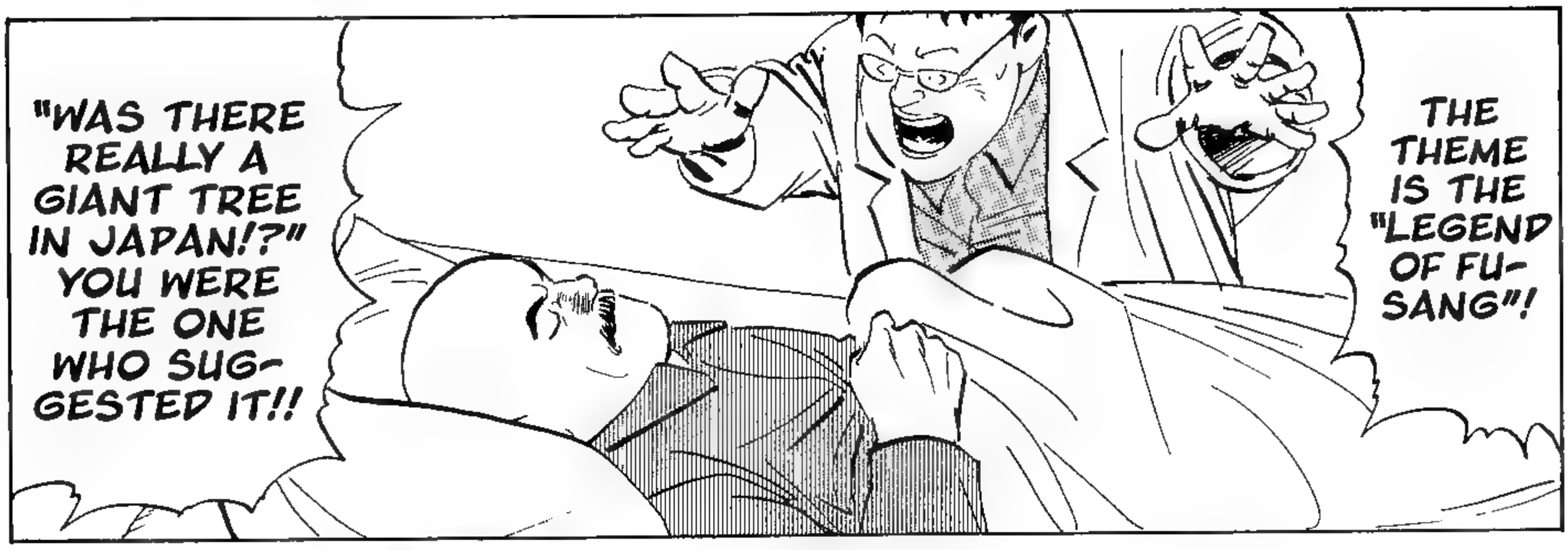
Okay!

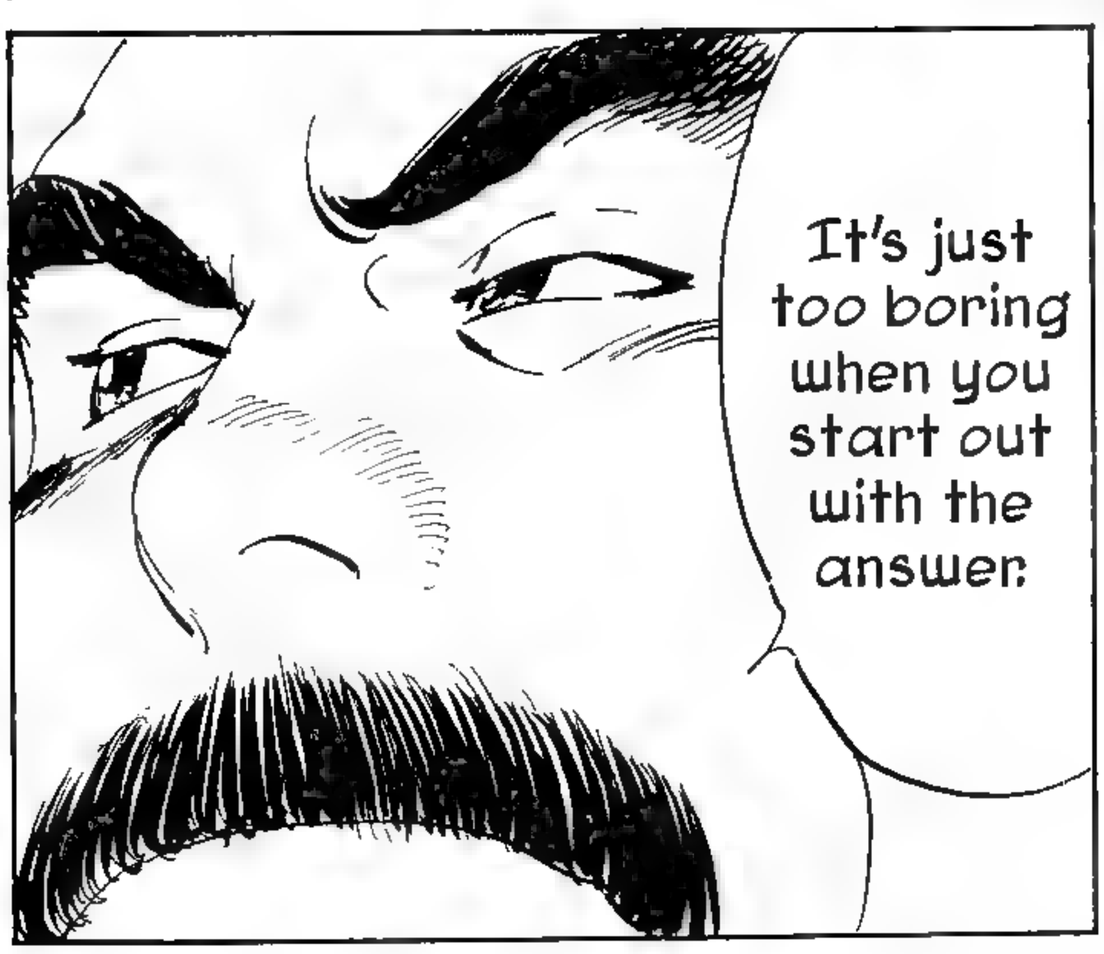
Oh, Taki, Yokotsuki's a bit of a sweet tooth. Go buy him some treats.

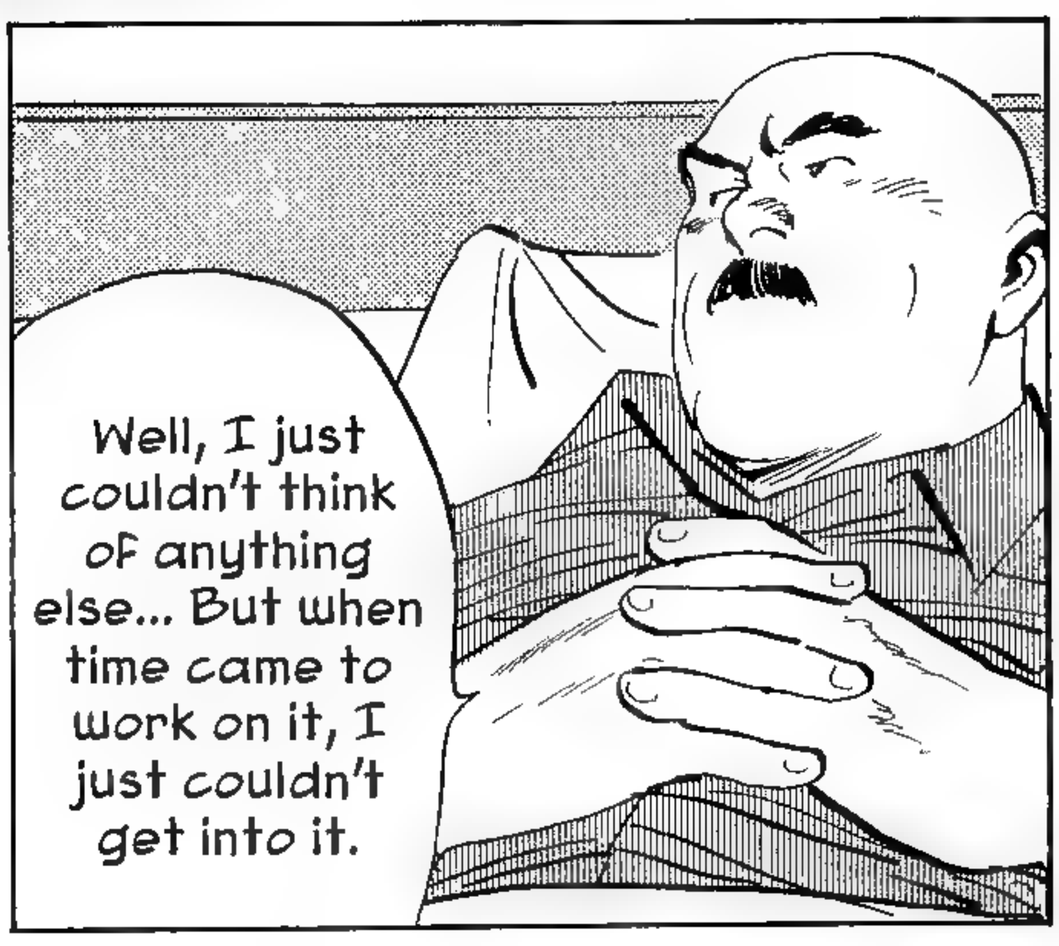
I haven't forgotten about it. I just couldn't work on it with this pain.

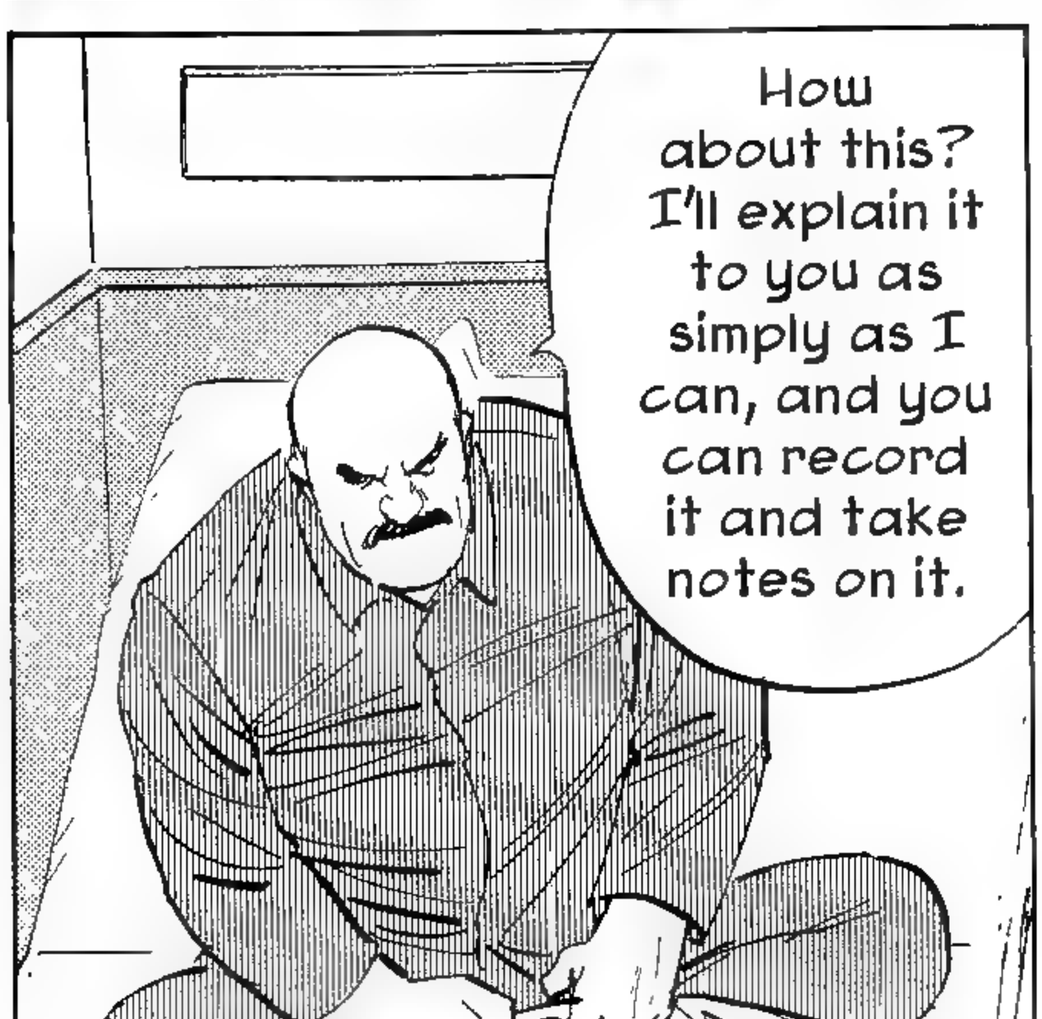
I'LL WAIT UNTIL TOMORROW! BUT PLEASE, TRY TO GET IT DONE TONIGHT !!

GRIN


"WAS THERE REALLY A GIANT TREE IN JAPAN!?" YOU WERE THE ONE WHO SUG-GESTED IT!!
THE THEME IS THE "LEGEND OF FU-SANG"!


It's just too boring when you start out with the answer.


Well, I just couldn't think of anything else... But when time came to work on it, I just couldn't get into it.


How about this? I'll explain it to you as simply as I can, and you can record it and take notes on it.
...Huh !?

Start out with the answer ...!?

Oh, I know!
Hmm ...

Is that a no?

YOU'RE KID-DING!!

Then you can type it up by tonight and bring it to me tomorrow. I'll touch it up and submit it as my manuscript.

W... WHAT'S WRONG, UNCLE !?

I'LL DO IT! I'LL DO IT! UNNGH...

Are you aware of "petrified wood", Yokotsuki?

Petrified wood...? I've never heard of that before!

Iwate Nesori Petrified Tree

They've been discovered all around the country, and most of them are "Metasequoia", a species that is extinct in Japan.

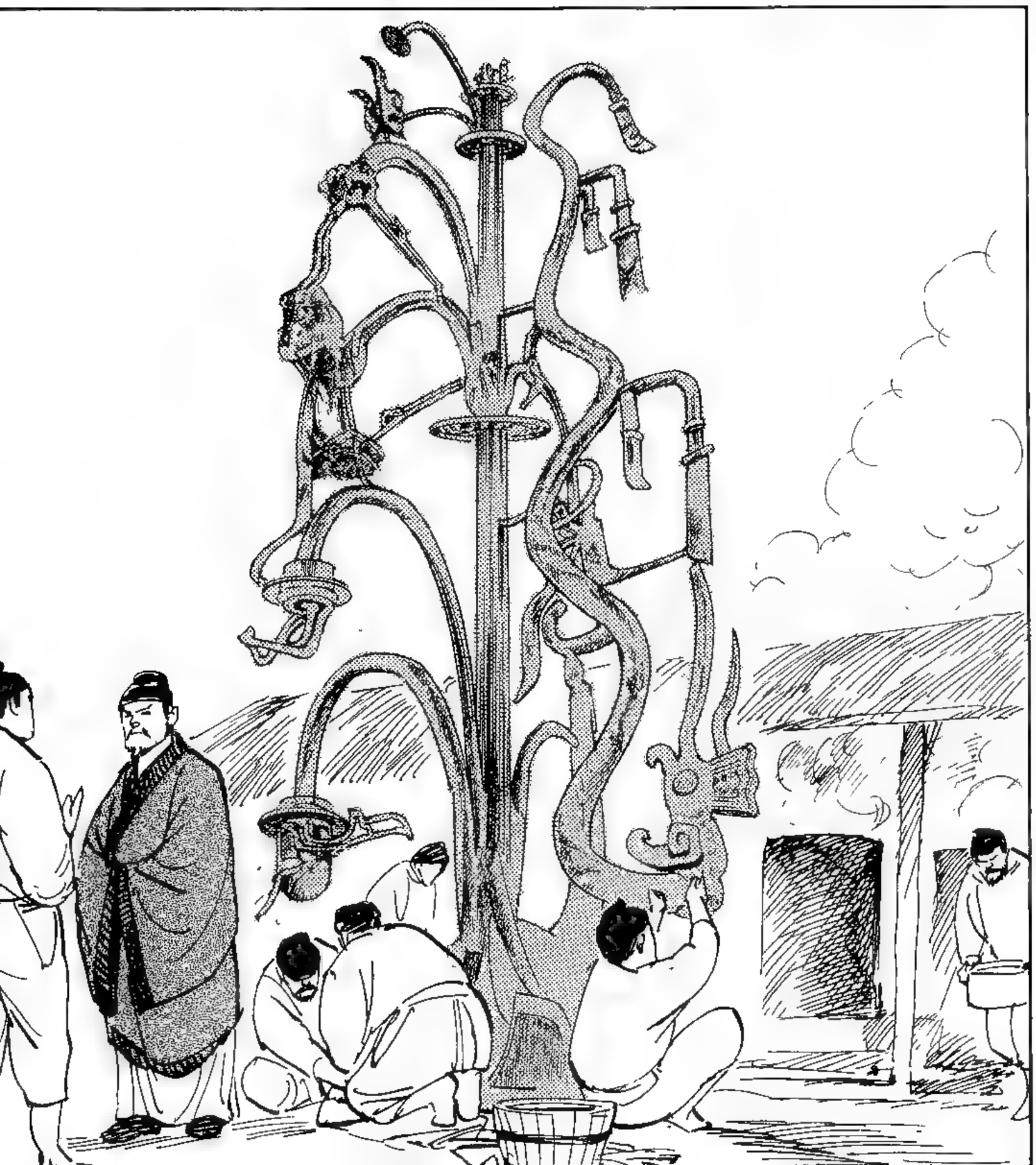
It's a fossil of a tree. A tree buried in the distant past that's had its tissue replaced by silicon, and become stone...

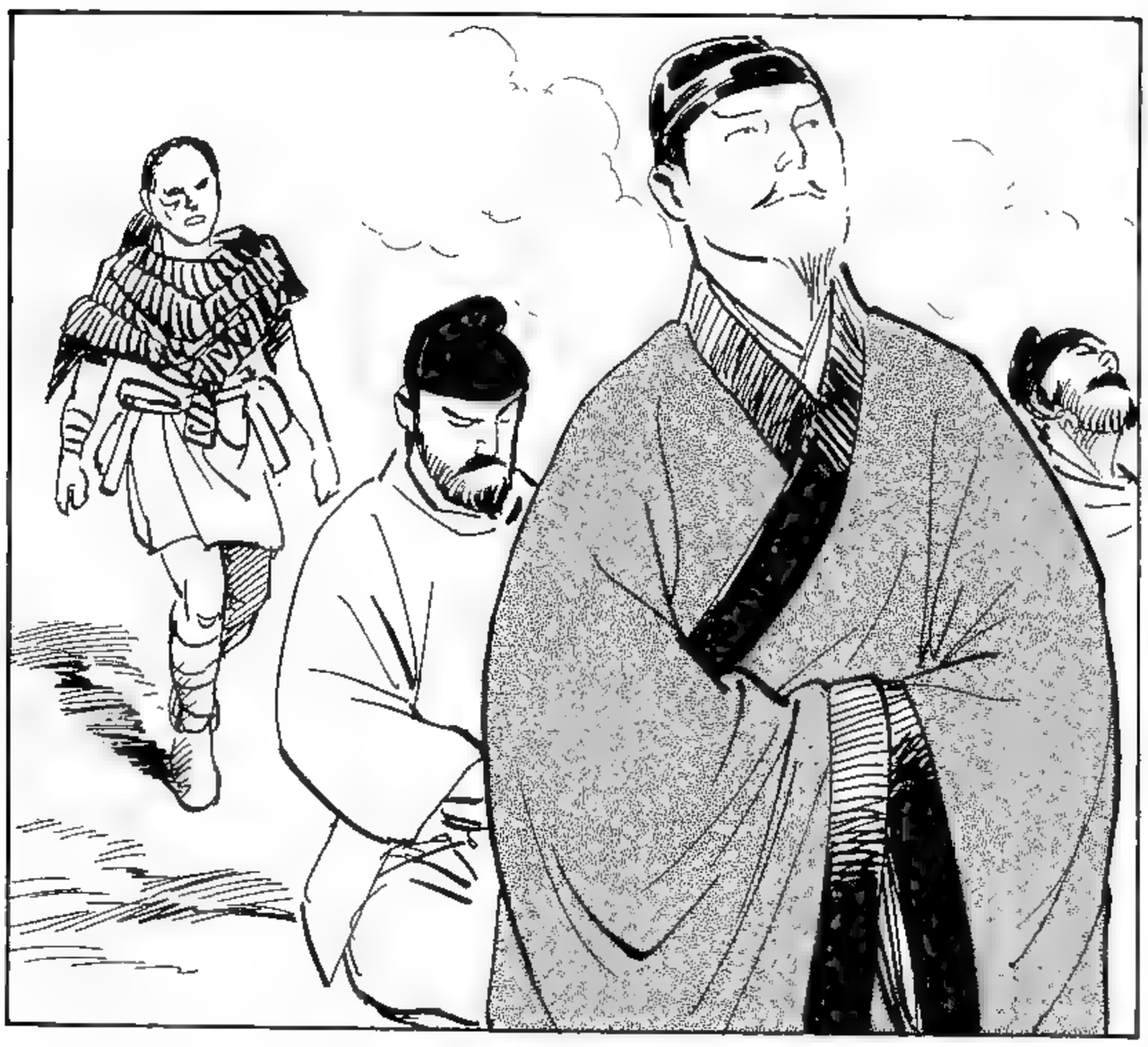
This means that millions of years ago, there were forests of Metasequoia covering the Japanese archipelago.

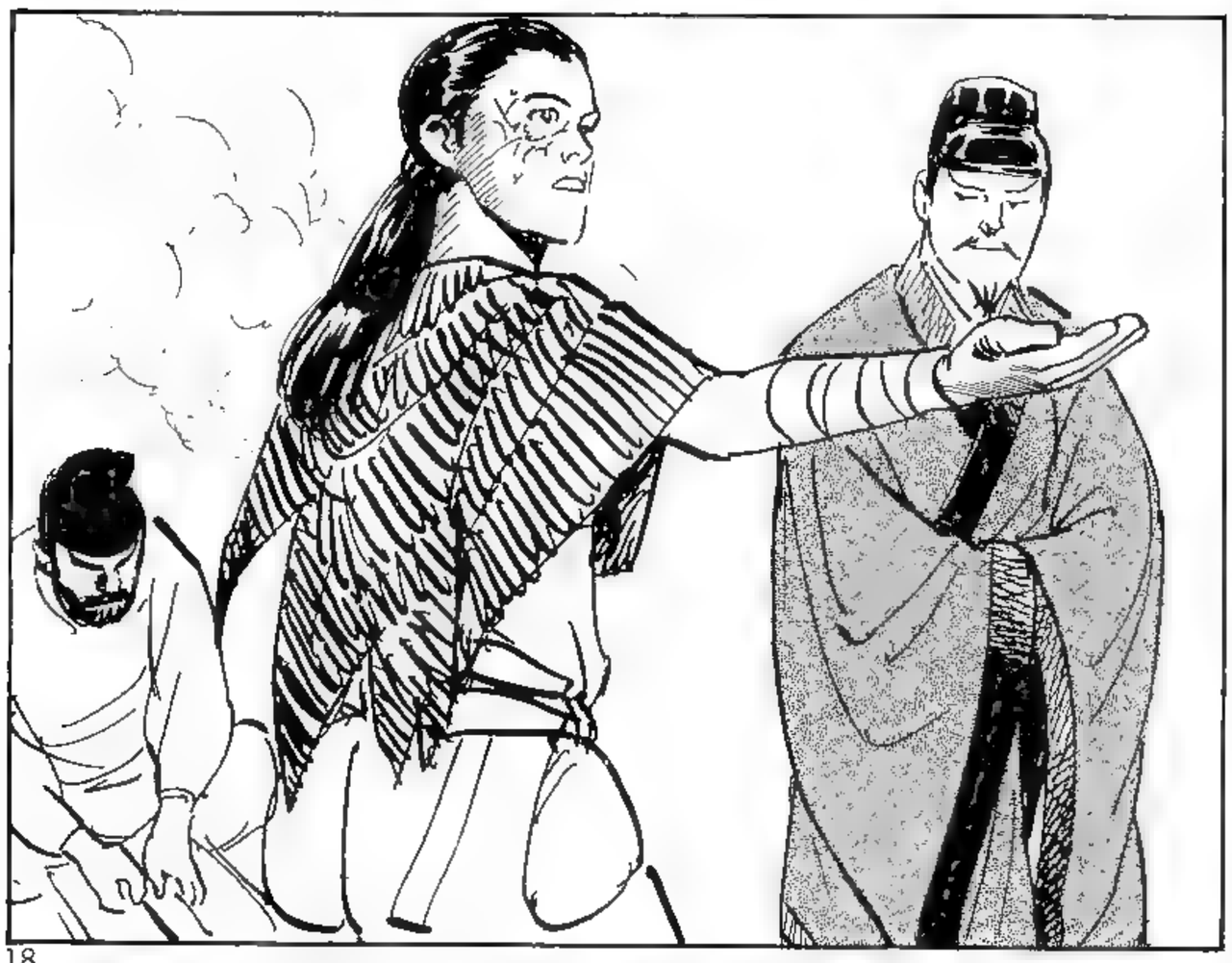
You could say it was a land deserving of the name Fusang.

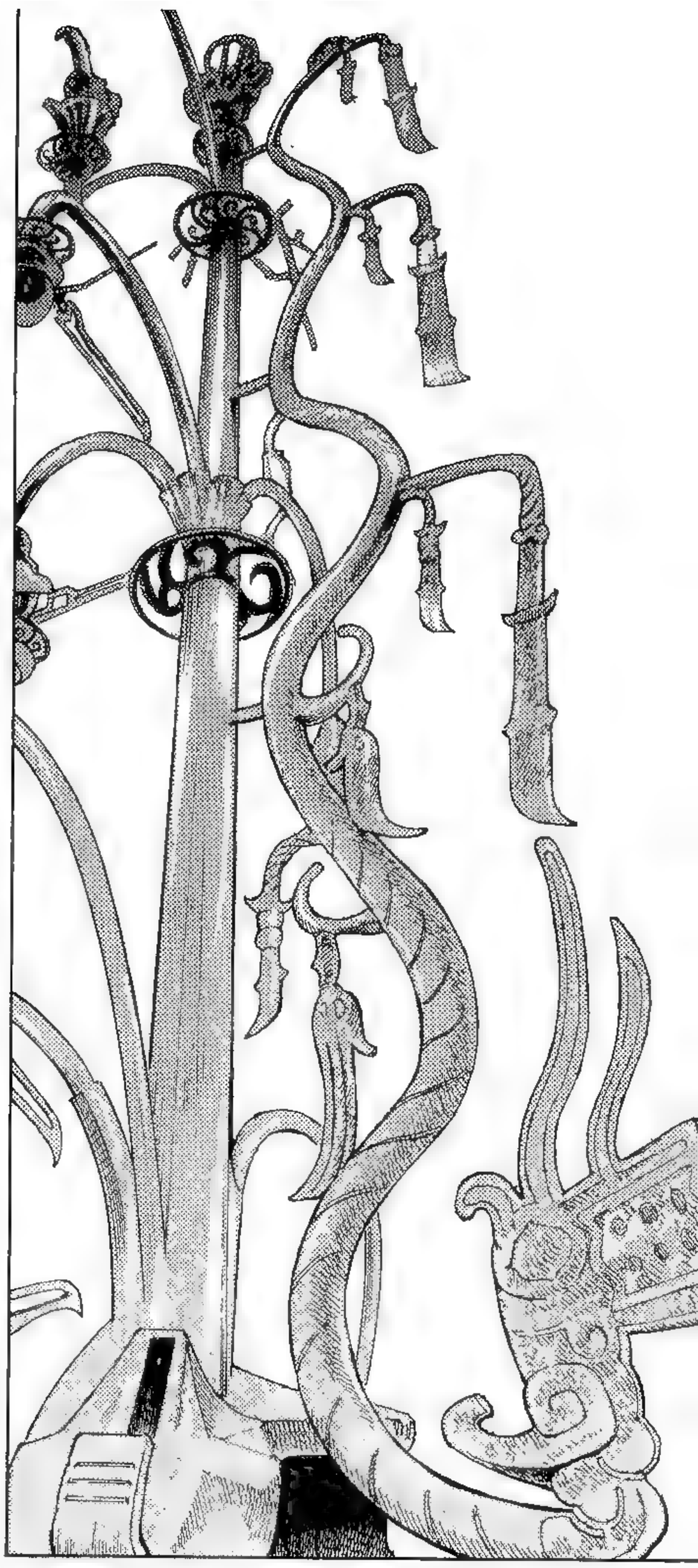
Of course, this was long before humans even existed...

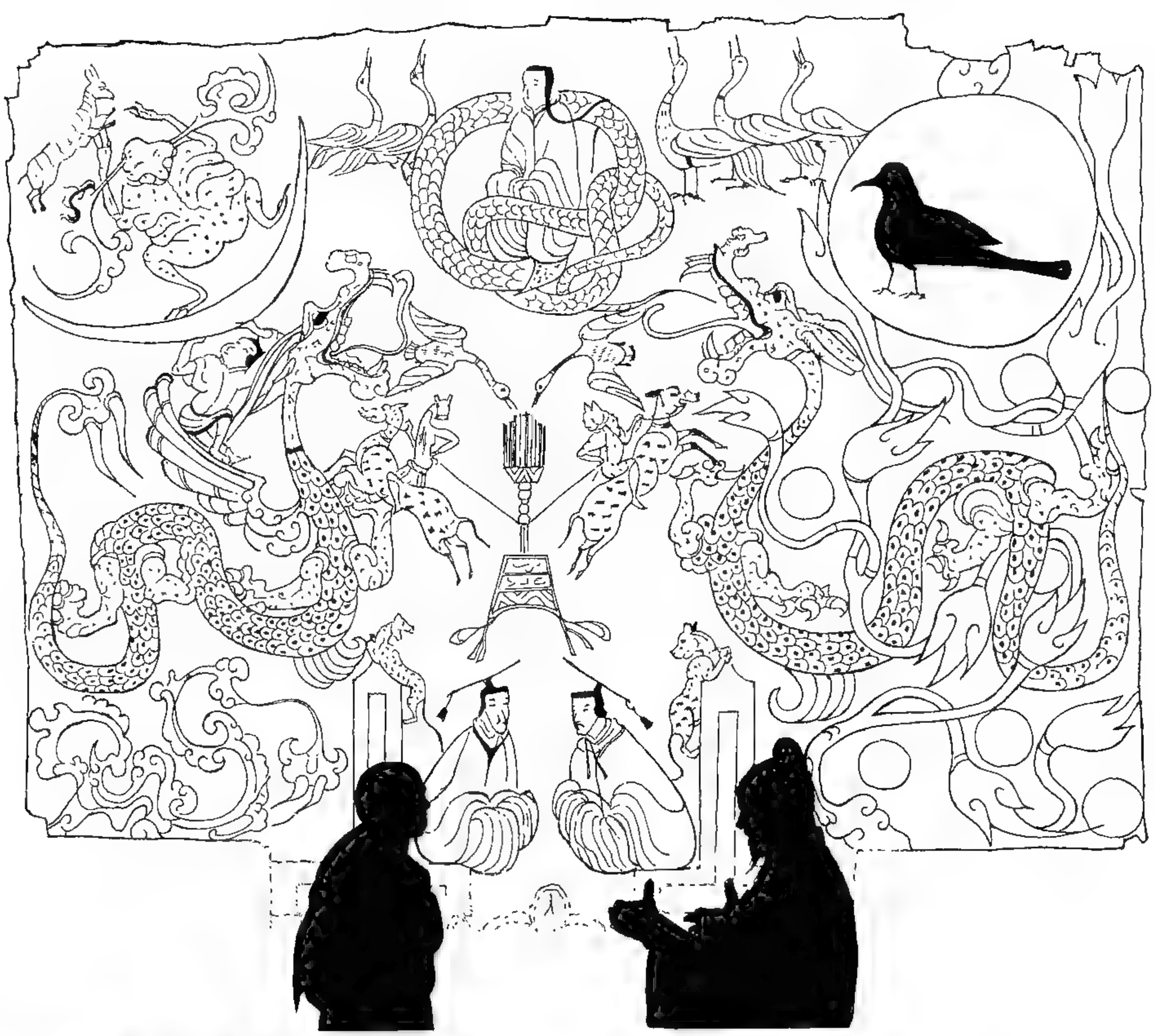
I see
…











FUSANG

Many of the settlers would have brought their myths and legends with them, along with their technology.

The legend of Fusang as depicted in the Chinese text, "The Classic of Mountains and Seas", arrived in Japan at an early period.

It was? Where ...!?

Then perhaps the legendary tree was buried somewhere...?

I wouldn't find it strange if there were those among them that believed that this was Fusang...

...The Nihon Shoki contains the following story...

In the 18th year of Emperor Keiko's reign, the Emperor went on a campaign to Kyushu to conquer Kumaso...

But when he came to Mike in Chikugo...

This was called the Kunugi, a tree that reached Heaven before it fell.

He was startled by a fallen tree over 970 jo long, and asked a local elder of its origins.

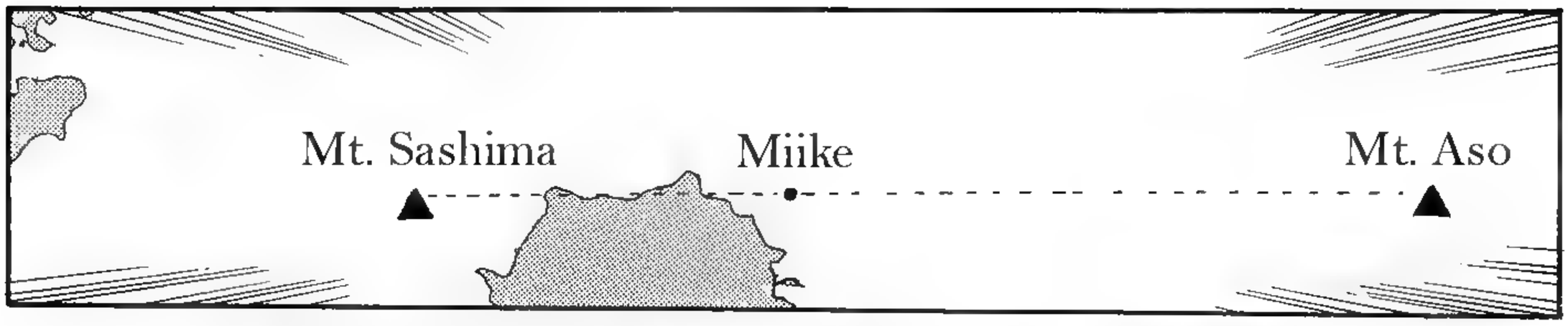
In the morning light, its shadow covered Mount Sashima (in Saga), and in the evening light, its shadow covered Mount Aso (in Kumamoto).

A...AND THAT'S FUSANG!? IT WAS IN KYUSHU!?

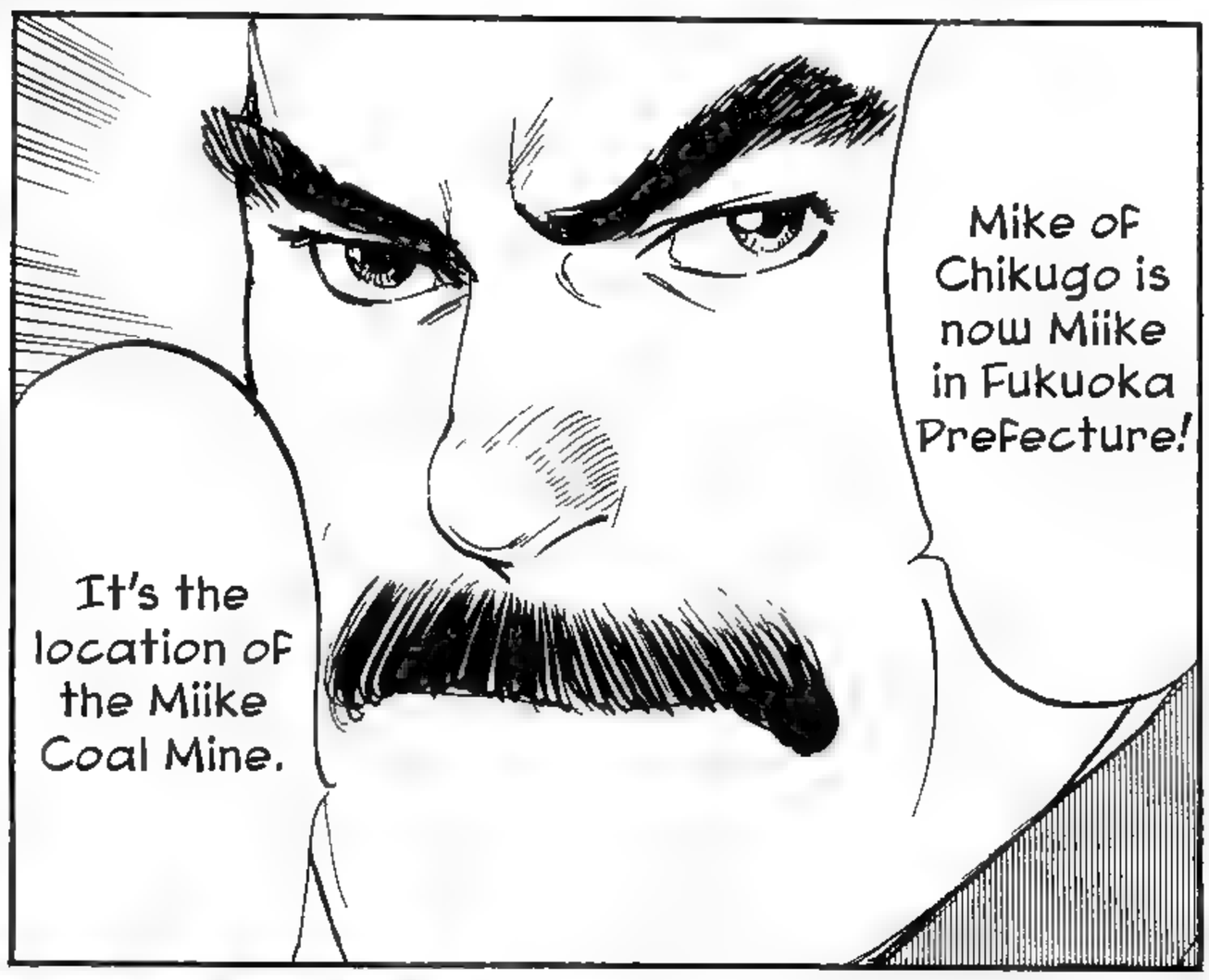
The Emperor recognized it as a divine tree, and had the land called "Mike", the Great Tree...

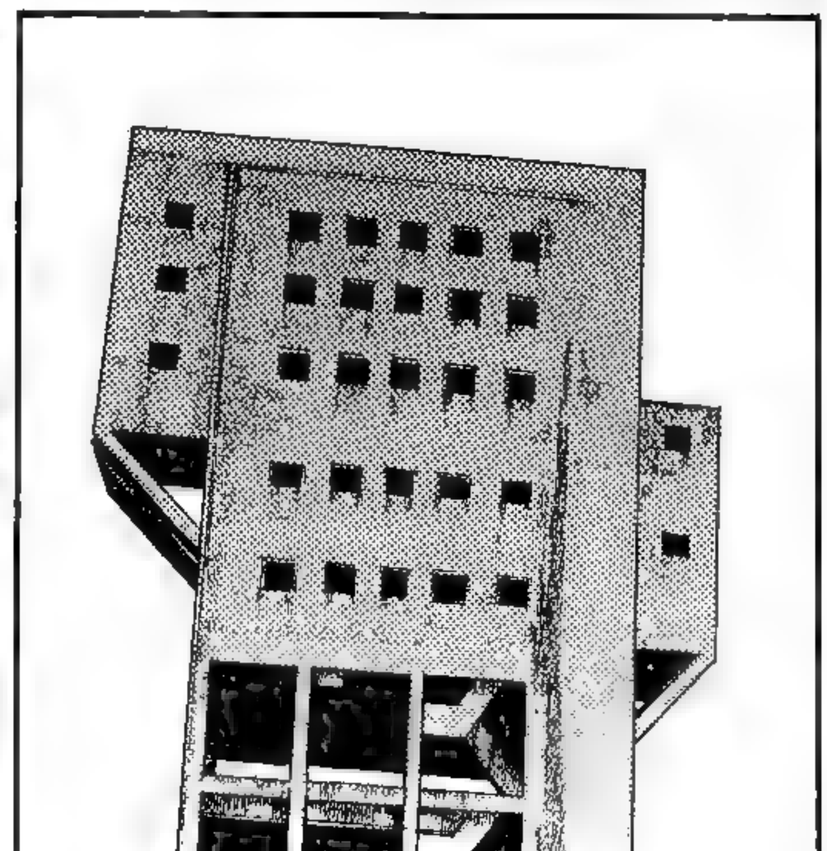
And this is why I said I started out with the answer!

Don't jump to conclusions. This is just a tradition that explains a place name.


Mt. Sashima
Miike
Mt. Aso

Coal ...!?


Mike of Chikugo is now Miike in Fukuoka Prefecture!
It's the location of the Miike Coal Mine.



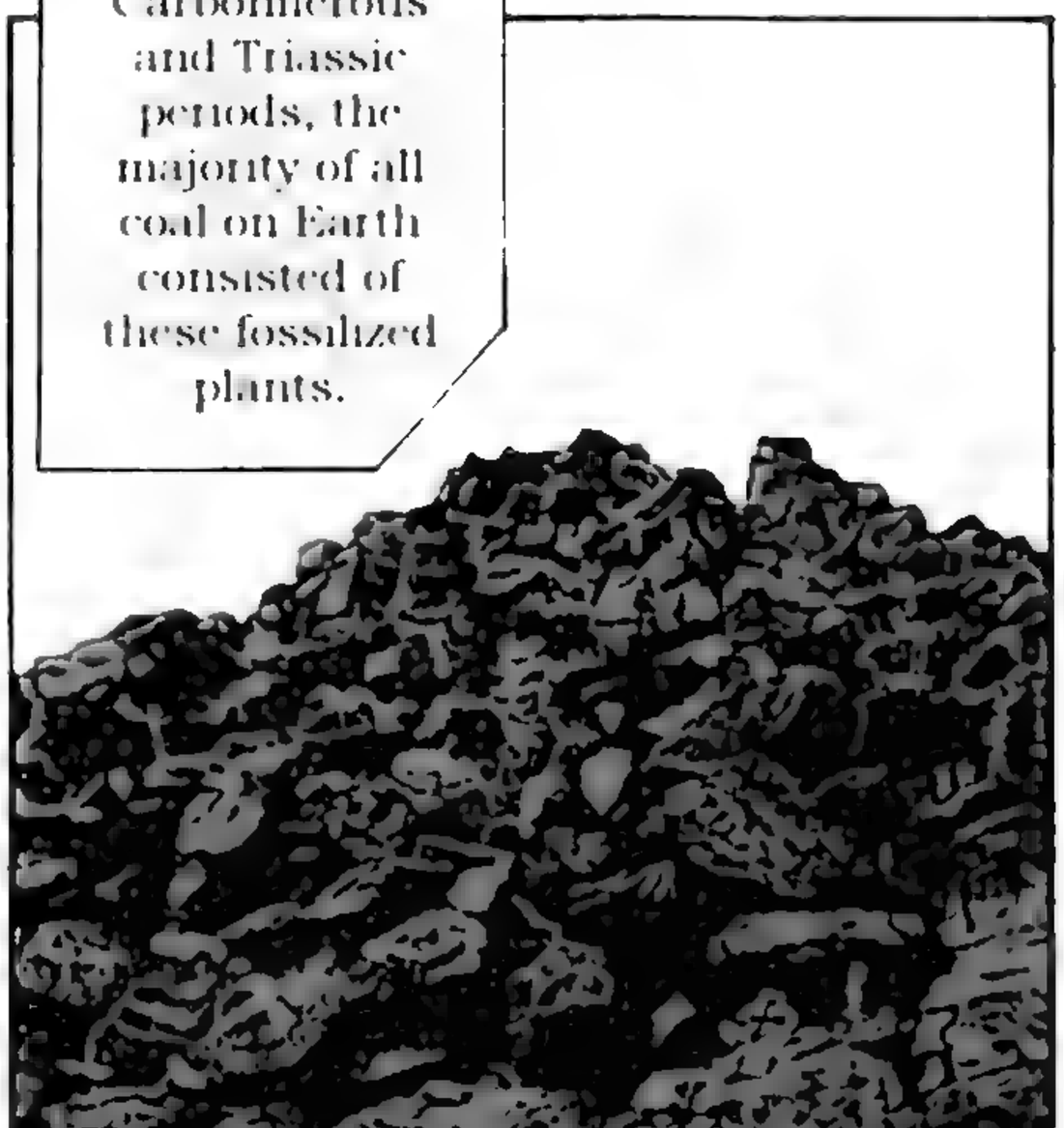
Three hundred million years ago, the Earth was covered by forests of giant lepidodendron trees.

This was the Carboniferous period in the Paleozoic era.

The fallen trees would rot away and vanish, but the ones that fell into lakes or wetlands remained.

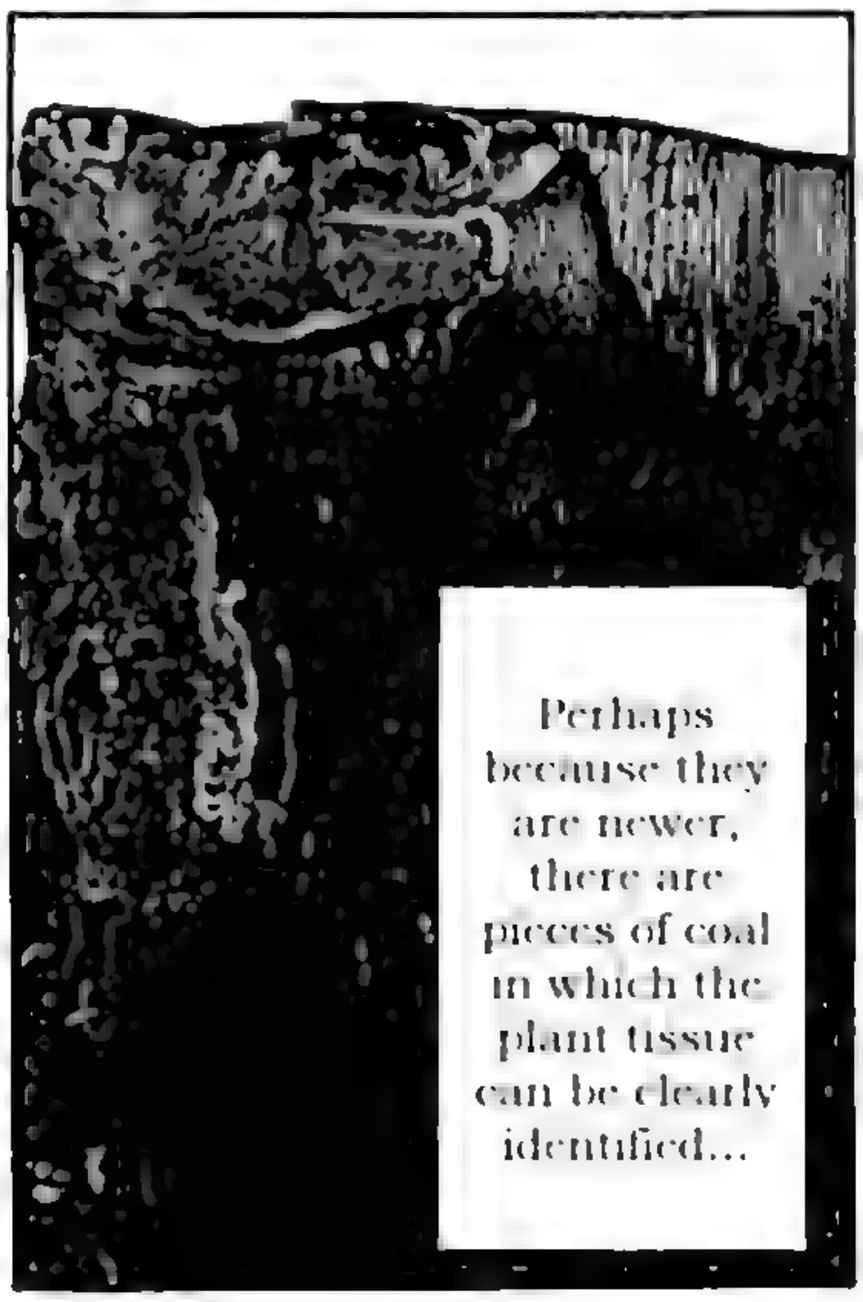
As they were buried by sediment over the years, they were heated and compressed by the layers of the Earth, until they became hard, black stones... That is, coal.

Between the Carbonferous and Triassic periods, the majority of all coal on Earth consisted of these fossilized plants.

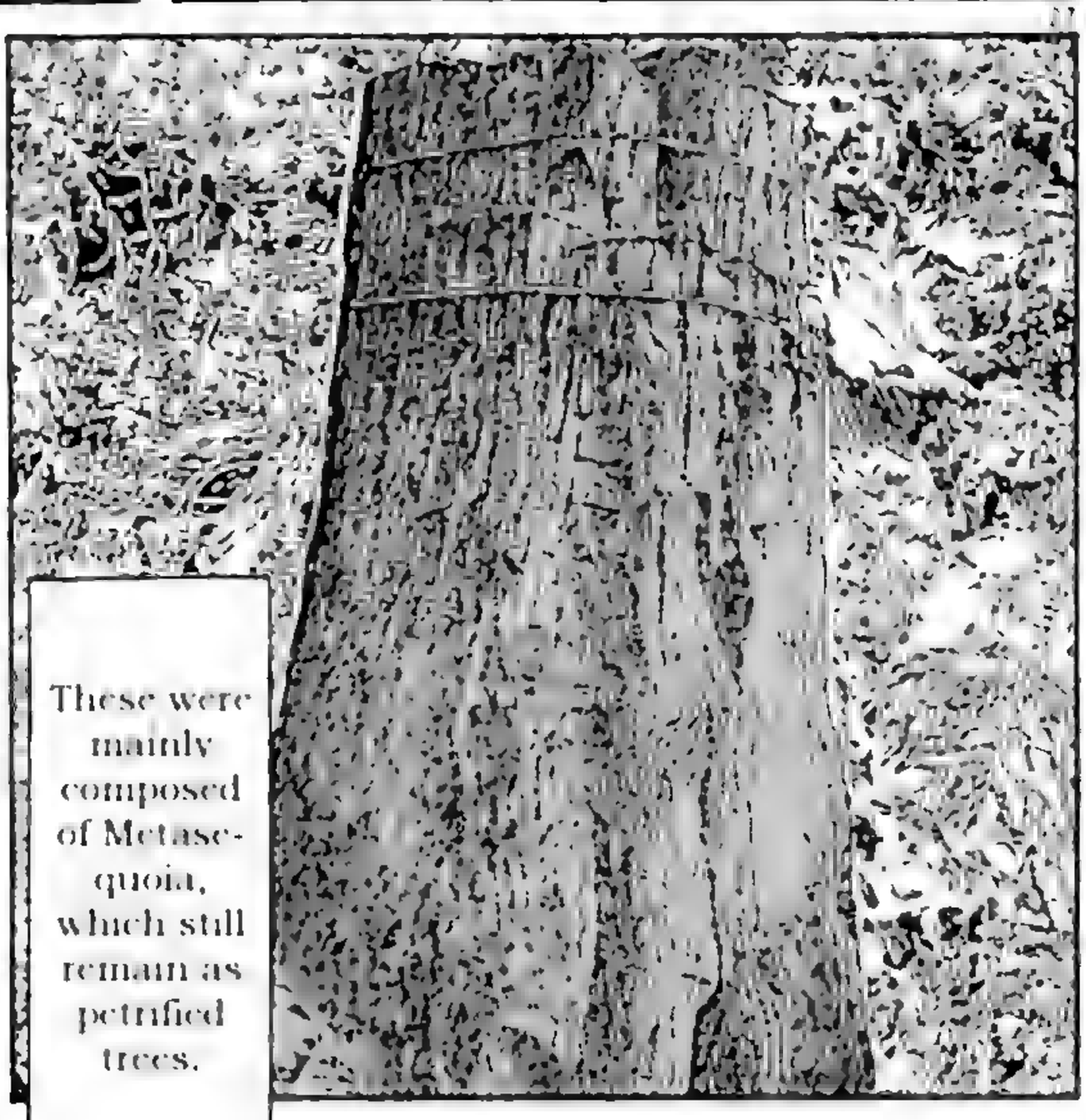


However ...

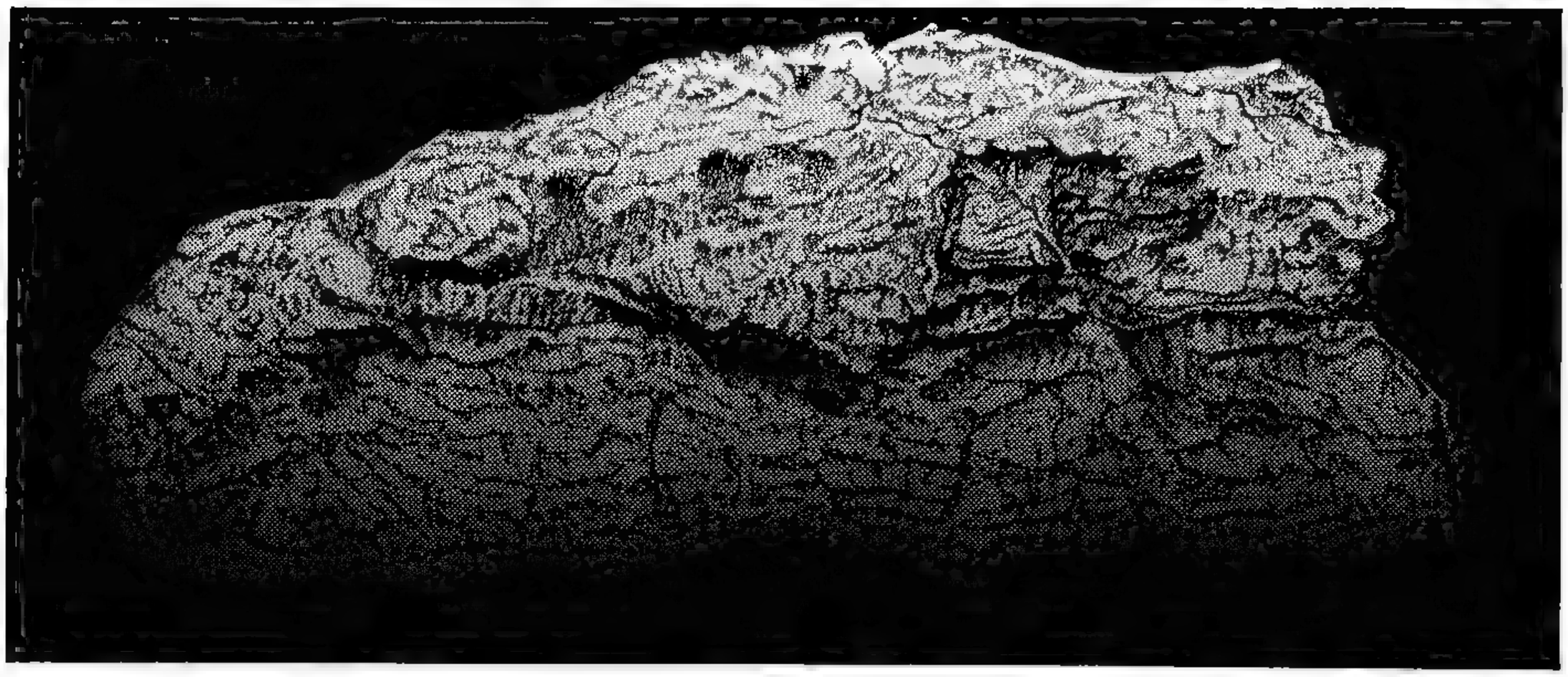
Most of the coal on the Japanese archipelago is far newer, made from trees about thirty million years ago, in the Tertiary period of the Cenozoic era.

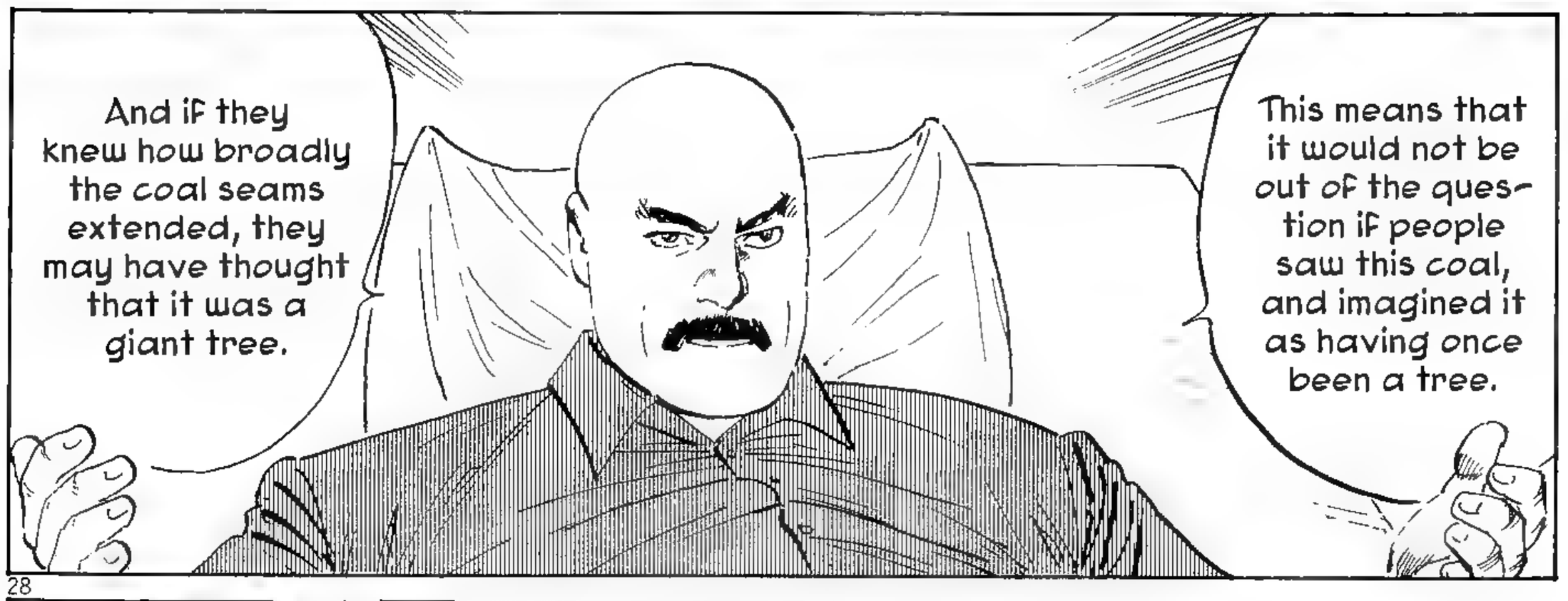


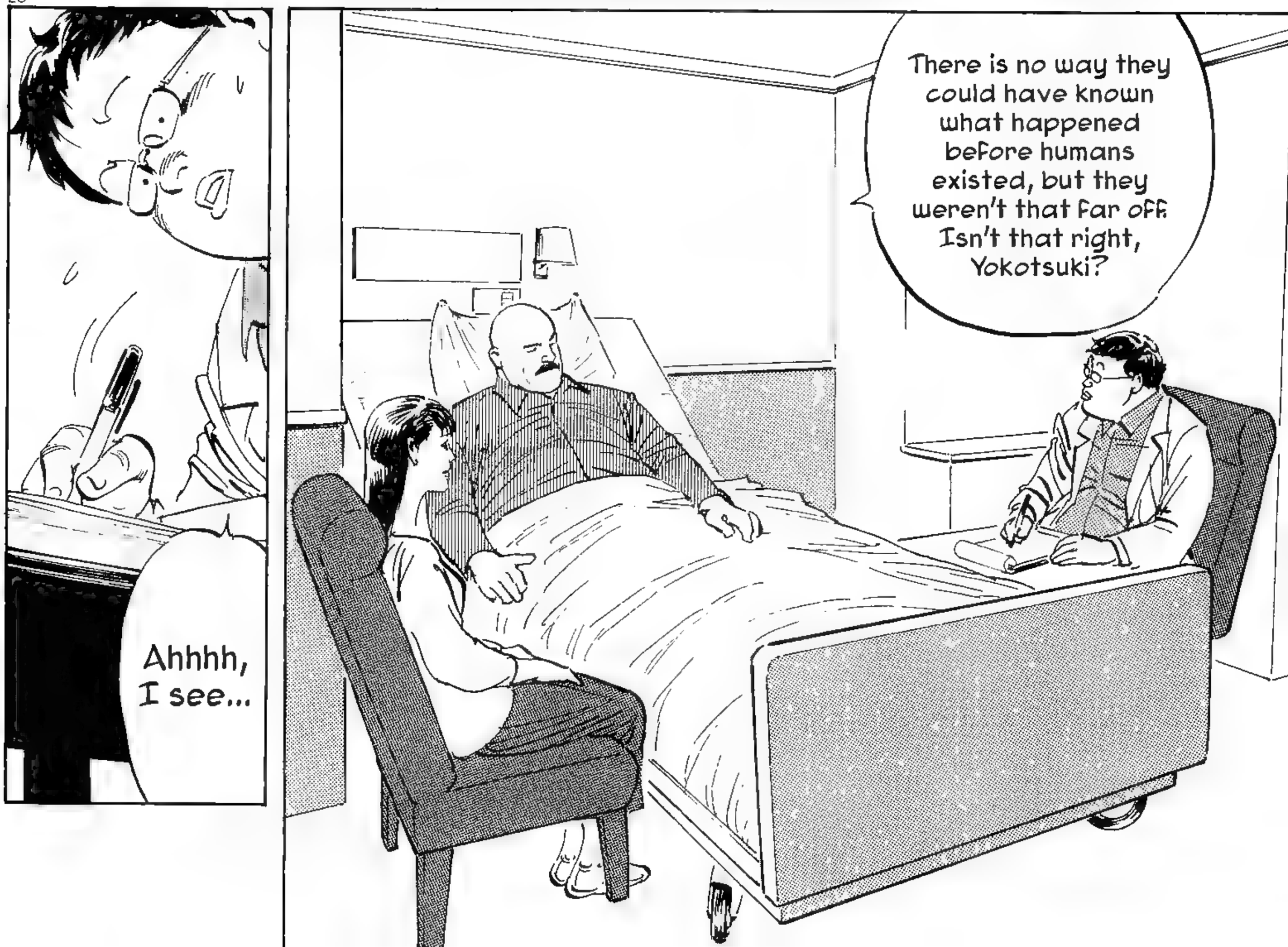
Perhaps because they are newer, there are pieces of coal in which the plant tissue can be clearly identified...



These were mainly composed of Metasequoia, which still remain as petrified trees.




And if they knew how broadly the coal seams extended, they may have thought that it was a giant tree.
This means that it would not be out of the question if people saw this coal, and imagined it as having once been a tree.


There is no way they could have known what happened before humans existed, but they weren't that far off. Isn't that right, Yokotsuki?
Ahhhh, I see...

Hmmm... I wouldn't say so, necessarily...

So Uncle, are you saying that we can find coal wherever there's a legend of a great tree?

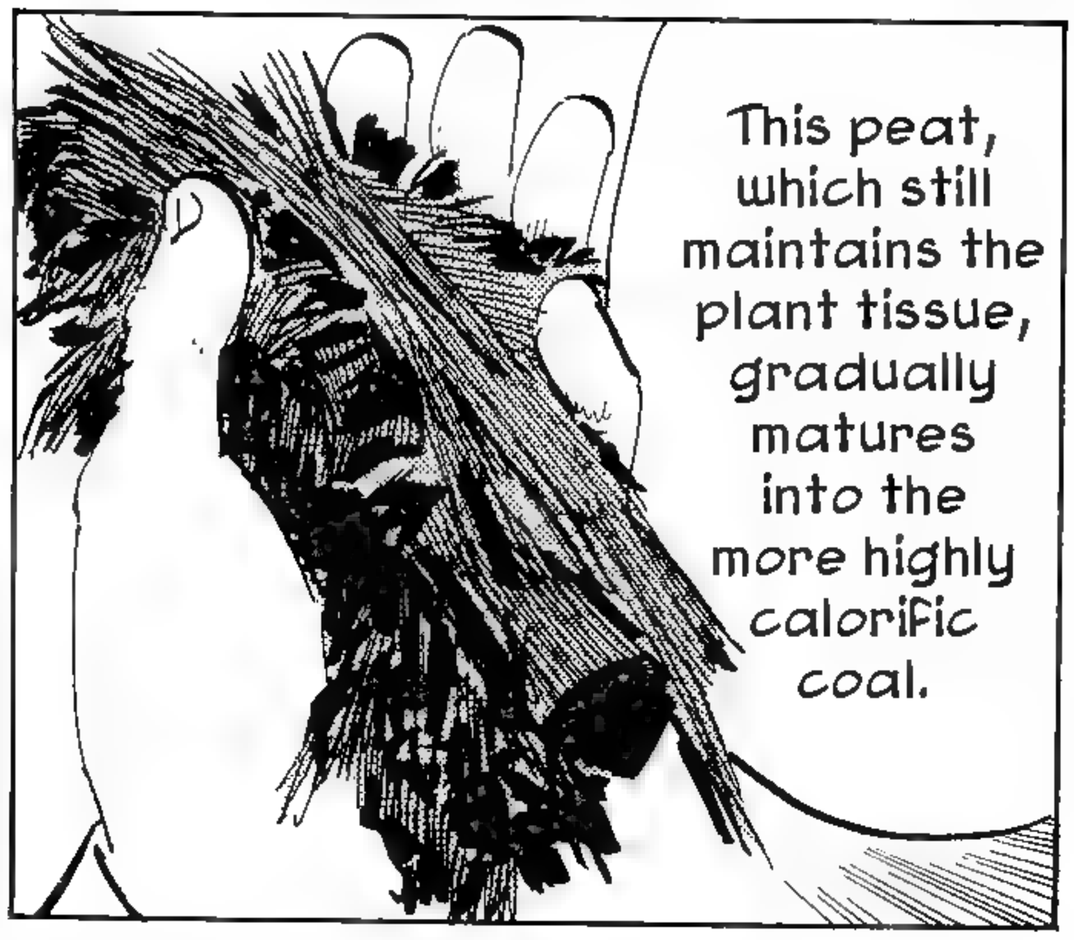
Take, for instance, the "Uji Shui Monogatari", which tells of a giant oak tree on Awaji Island.

The peasants living in its shadow appealed to the Emperor of the time, who had it cut down.

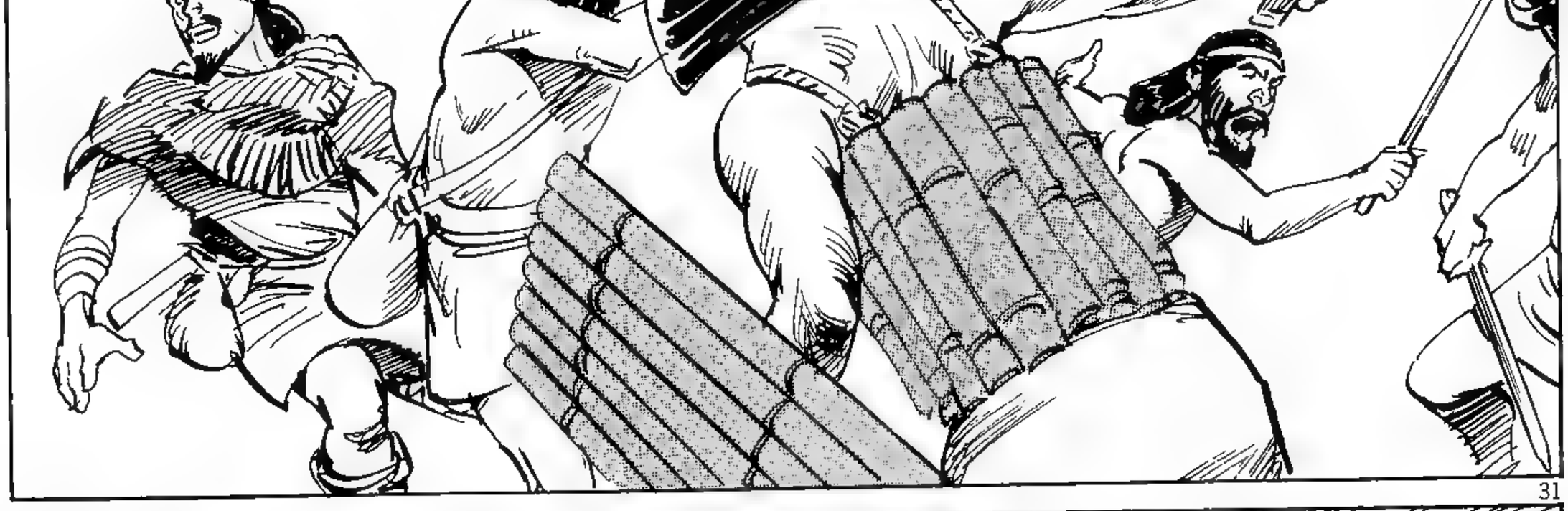
It was five hundred fathoms around, and thousands of *jo* tall... Its morning shadow would cover Tanba, and its evening shadow would cover Ise...

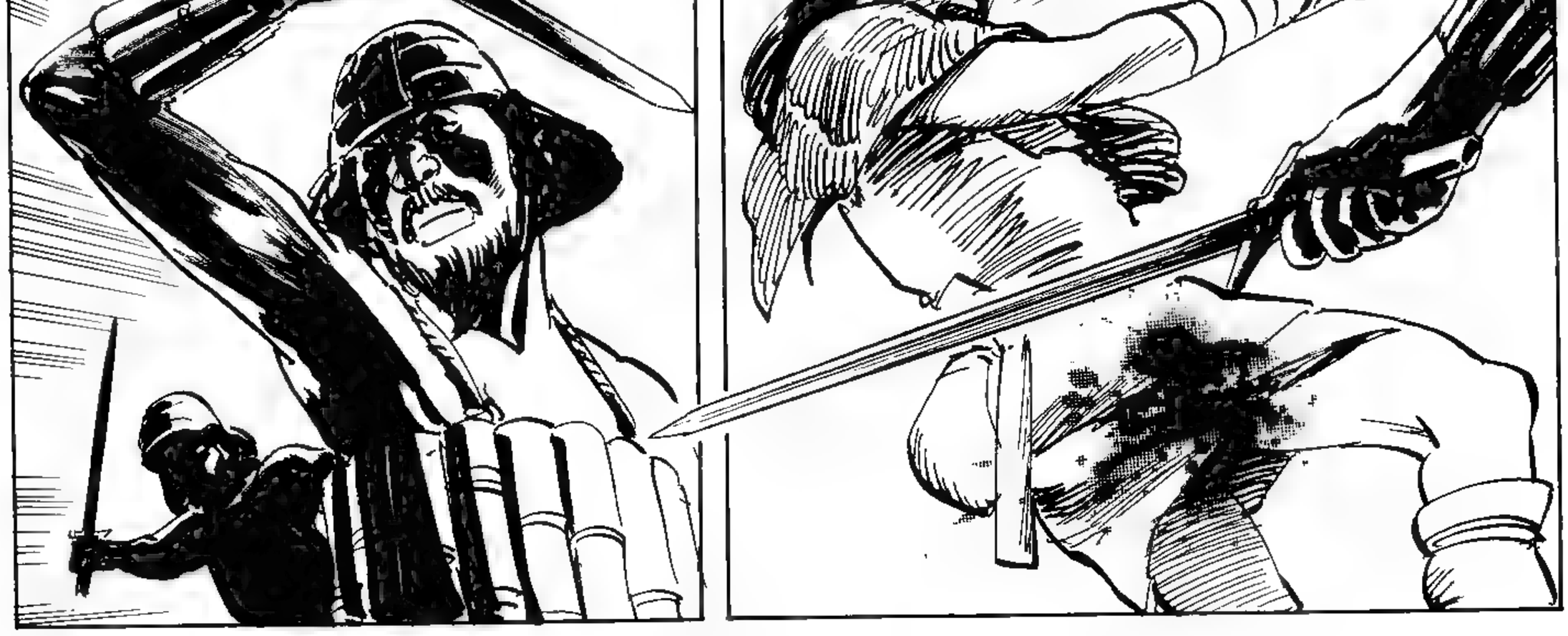
You can actually find oak leaves in the earth's layers, if you dig deep enough.

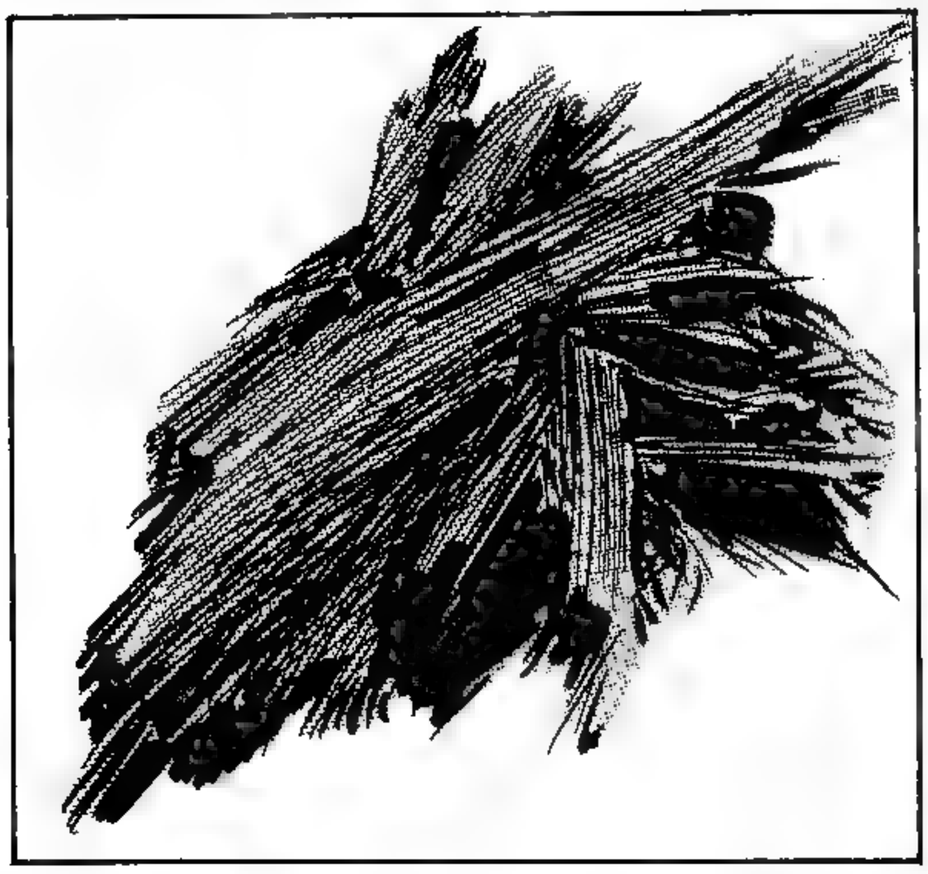
There are ancient plant remains in what's known as the humus layer; as well as "peat", the early stage of coal.

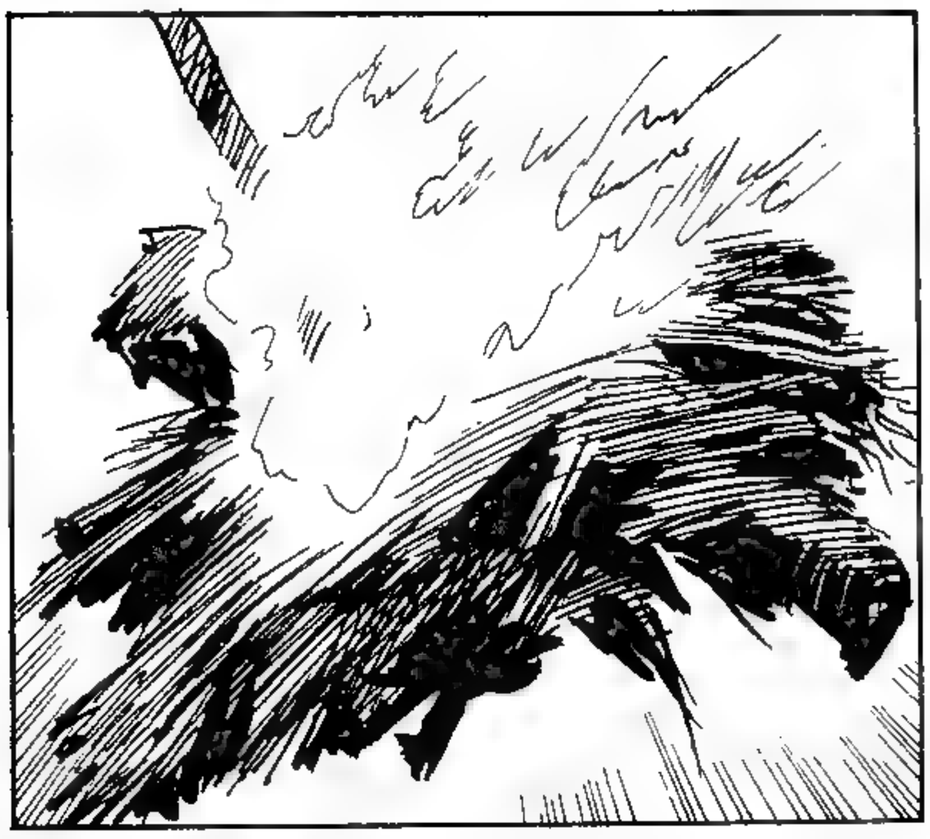


This peat, which still maintains the plant tissue, gradually matures into the more highly calorific coal.









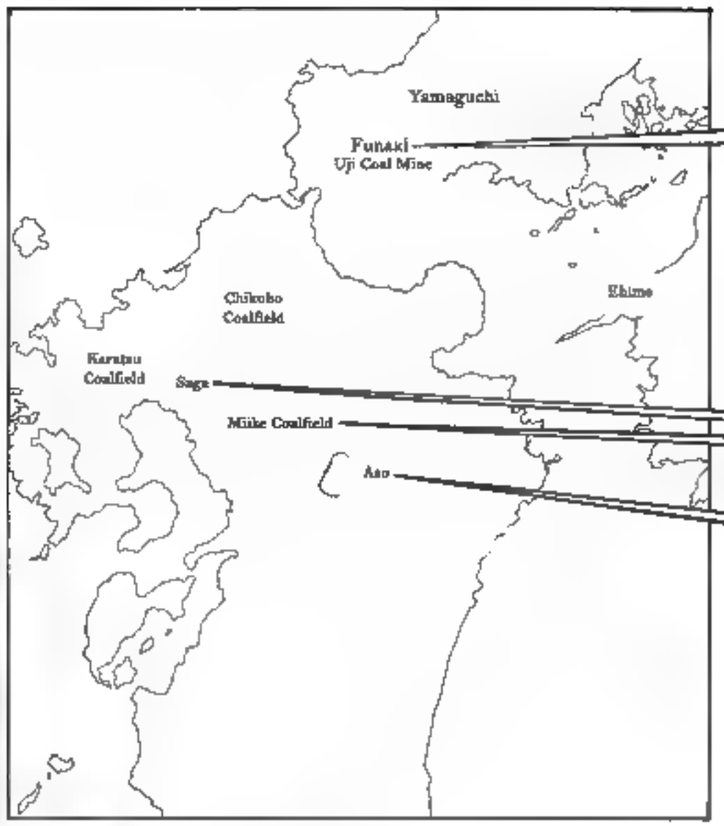
When Empress Jingu's army sailed forth to conquer Silla,

they felled a giant camphor tree in Nagato (Yamaguchi Prefecture), according to a legend in an Edo-period archive.

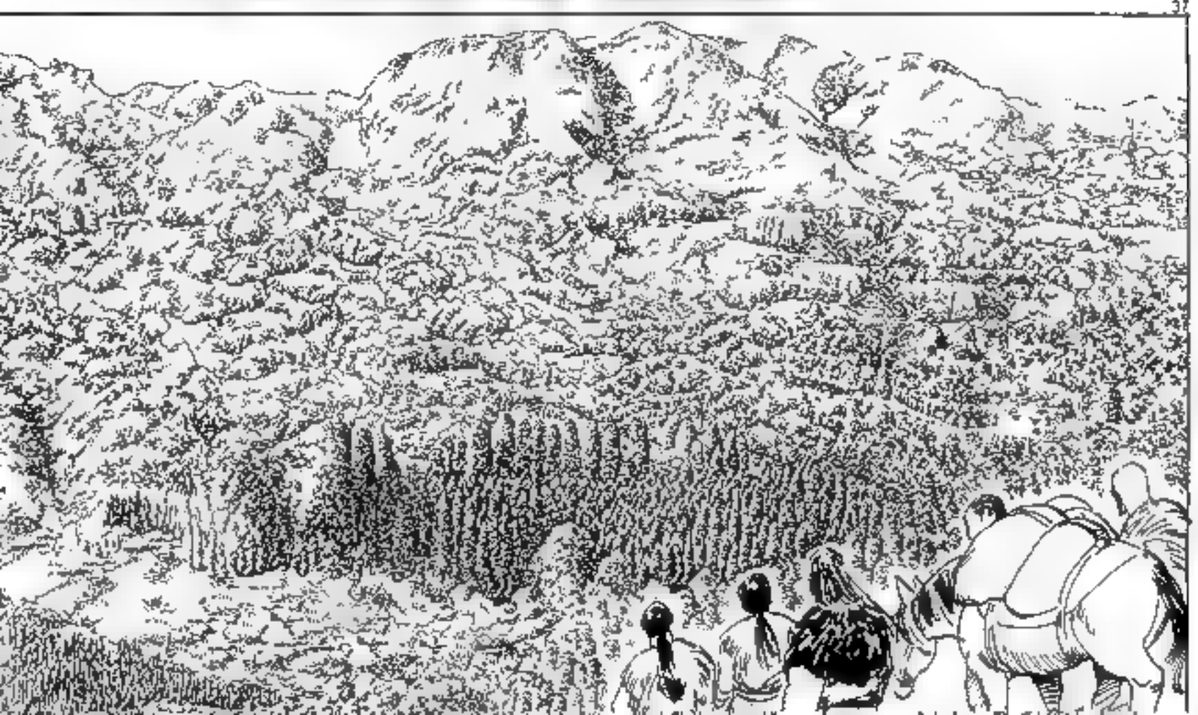
As they made their warships from this tree, they gave the place the name "Funaki". They buried the remaining timber, which it says is now becoming coal.

This coal was also known as "crow stones" for their pitch-black color, and the villagers would dig it up and use it as fuel.

It's likely that people knew that they were made of ancient trees even earlier than that.

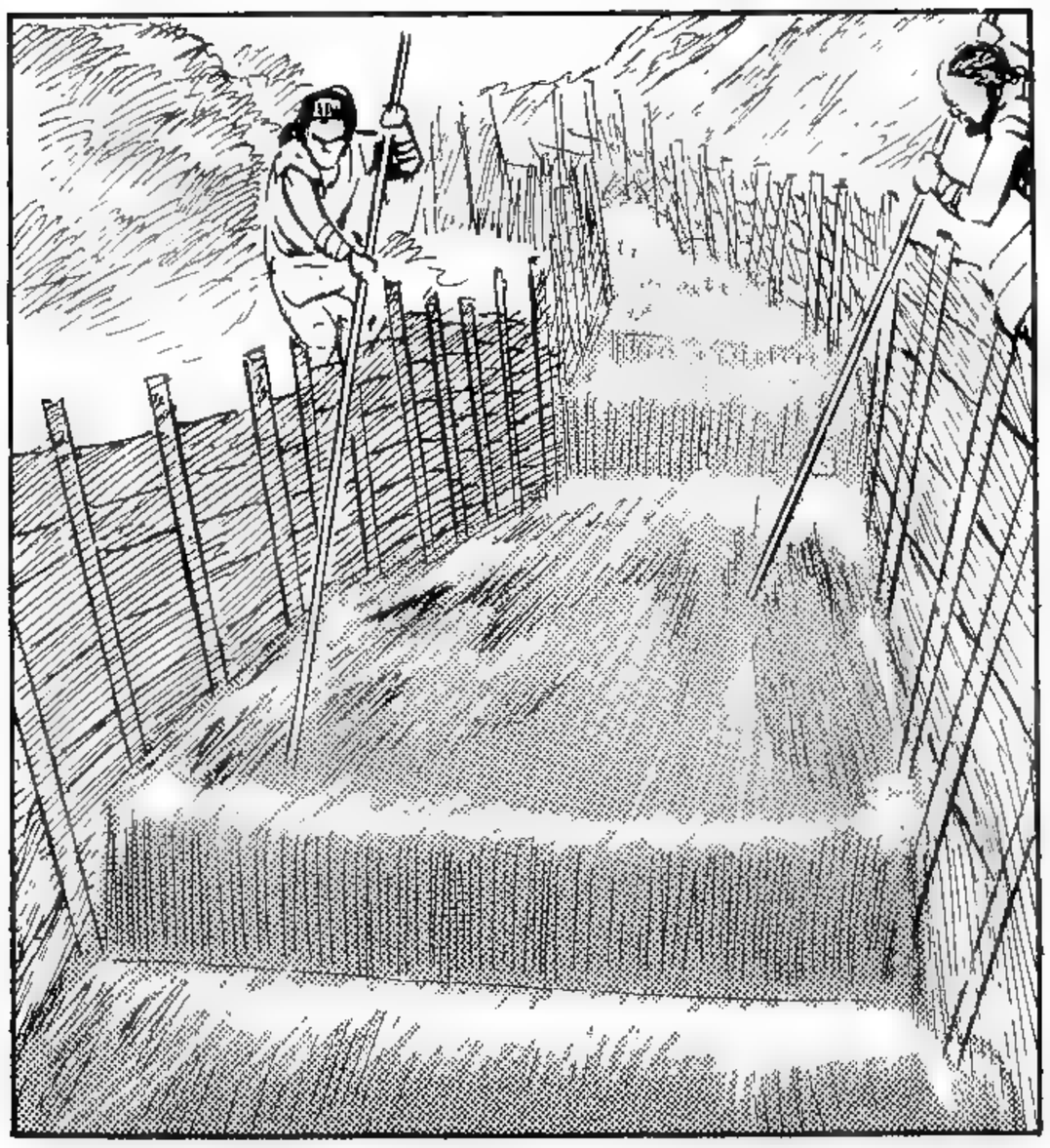

Yamaguchi
Funaki
Uji Coal Mine
Chikubo
Coalfield
Ehime
Karatsu
Coalfield
Saga
Mike Coalfield
Aso

This is supported by the fact that there are many legends of g ant trees in Kyushu, including M.ike.
There s an U,i Coal Mine n Yamaguchi Prefecture, but most of the major coal m ning regions, aside from Hokkaido, are centered in Kyushu



There is also a saying that there used to be a giant tree in Takamori, Aso, and that its broken branches are still being unearthed

The "Chronicles of Hizen Province" states that there was a giant camphor tree in Saga District, which covered the nearby mountains with its shadow



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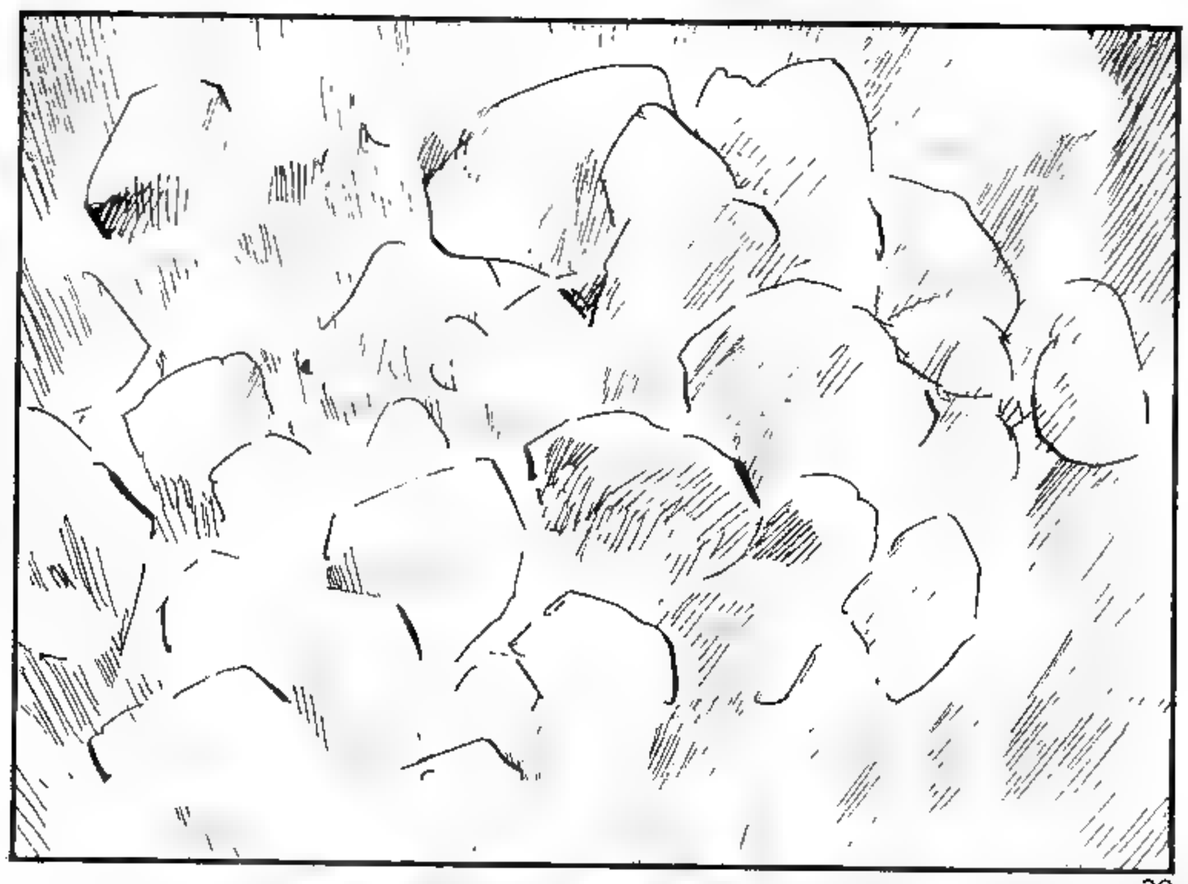

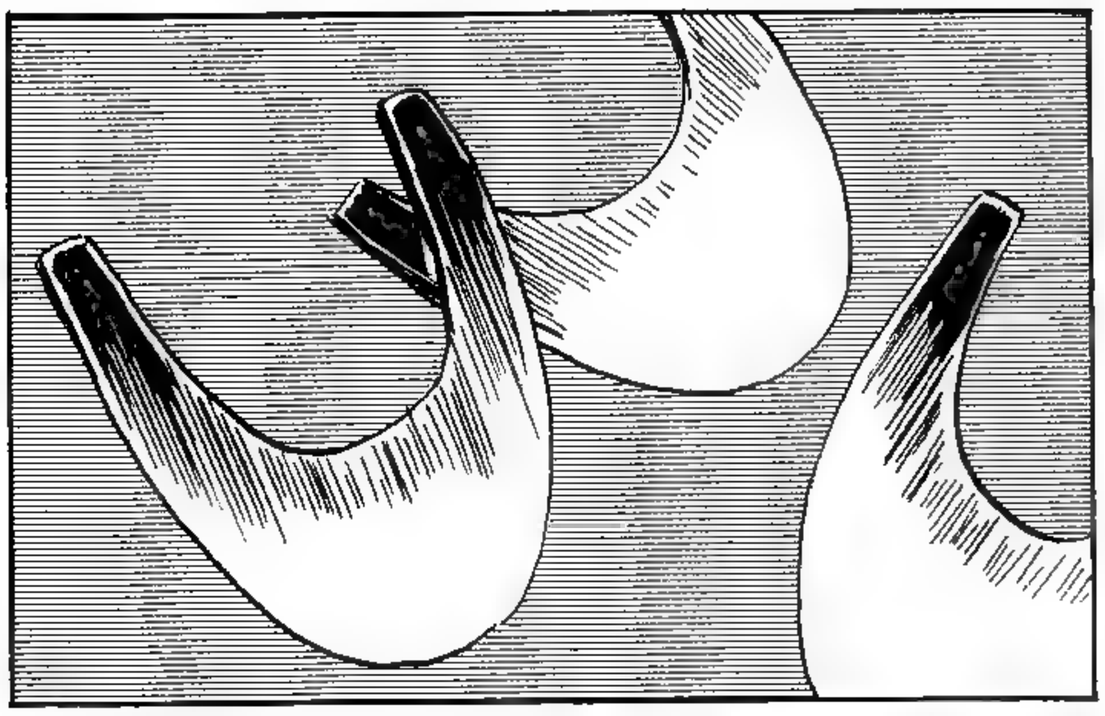

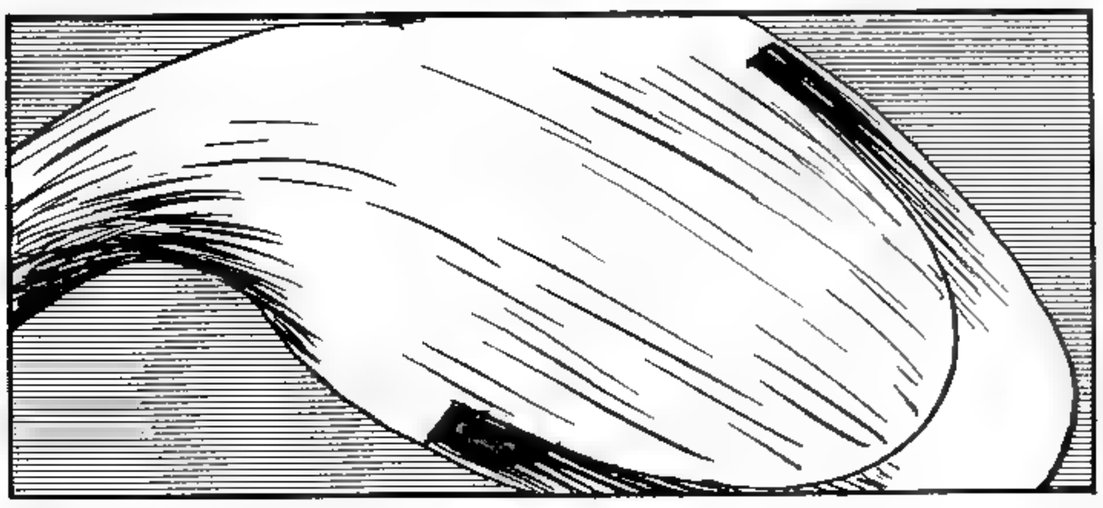

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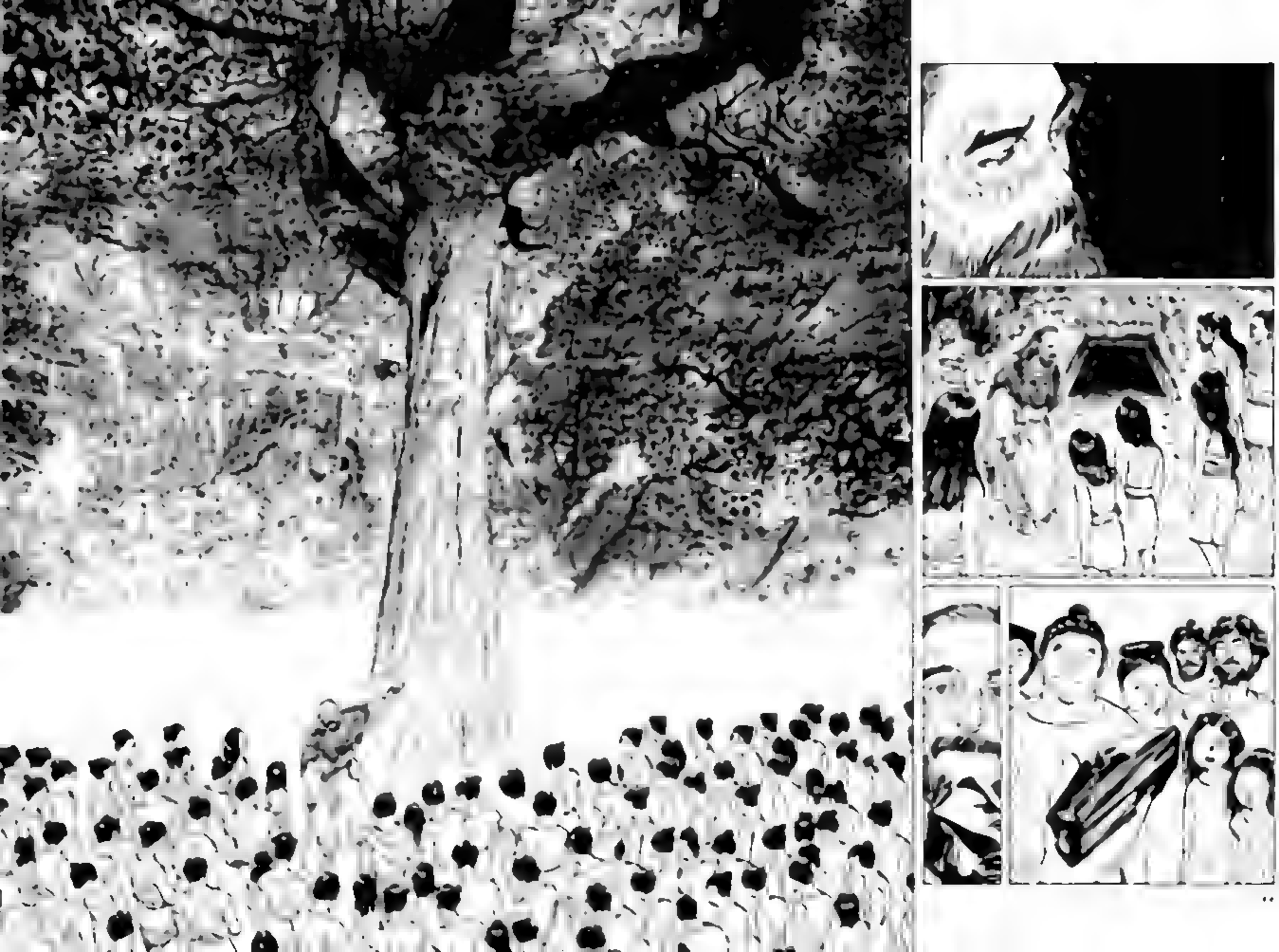
Coal, giant trees, the legend of Fusang from China... These are all connected?

Someone connected them. Someone in ancient times...

Like a historian, or a folklorist...

It could have been someone who travelled around, formulating theories.



His travel journal "Seiyuki", which records his journey of West Japan, contains the following story.

This was the Edo-period physician and writer, Tachibana Nankei...

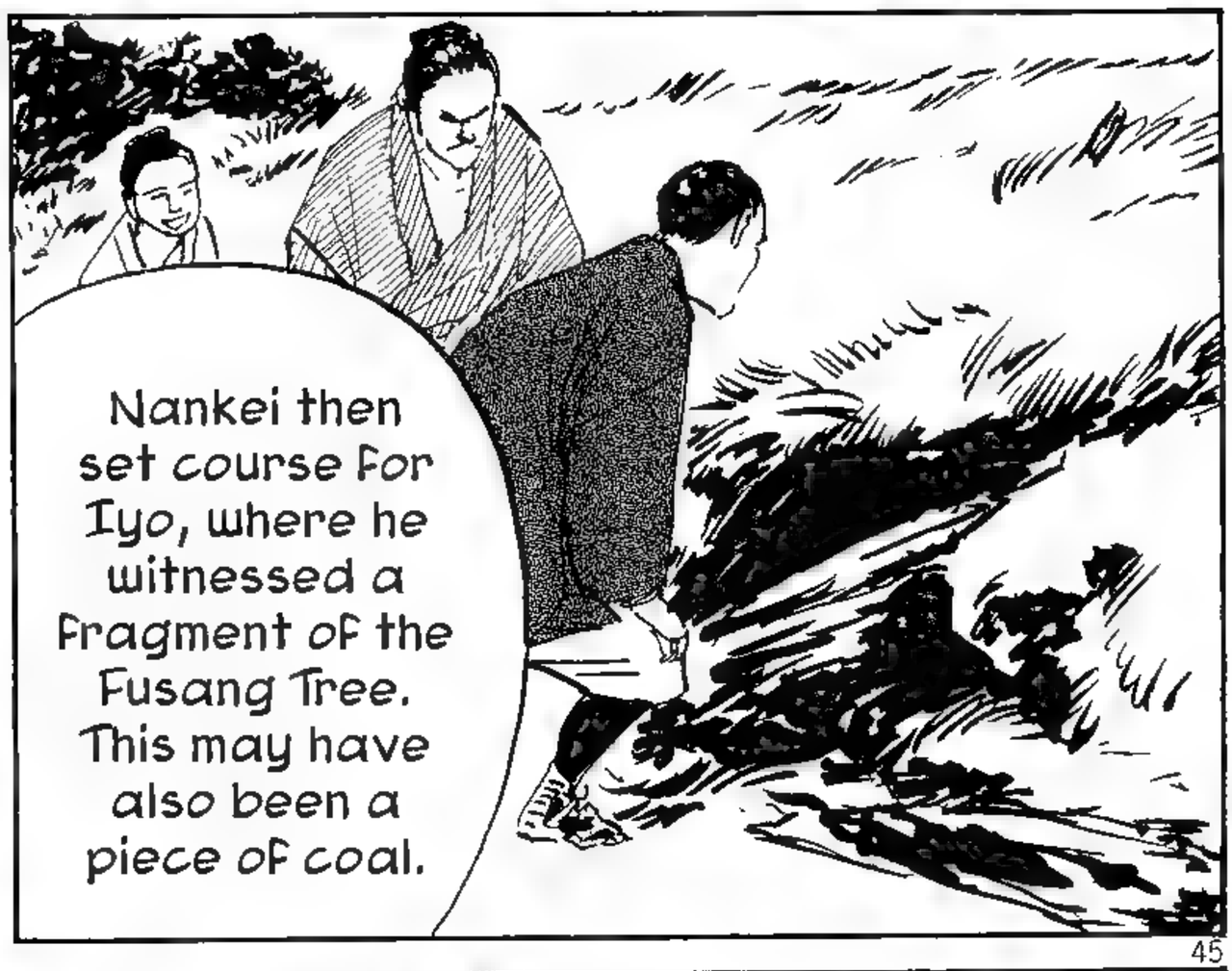
There is another figure who travelled the nation and wrote about Fusang, far later.

At a temple in Nagasaki, a monk named Meigetsu showed me something peculiar.

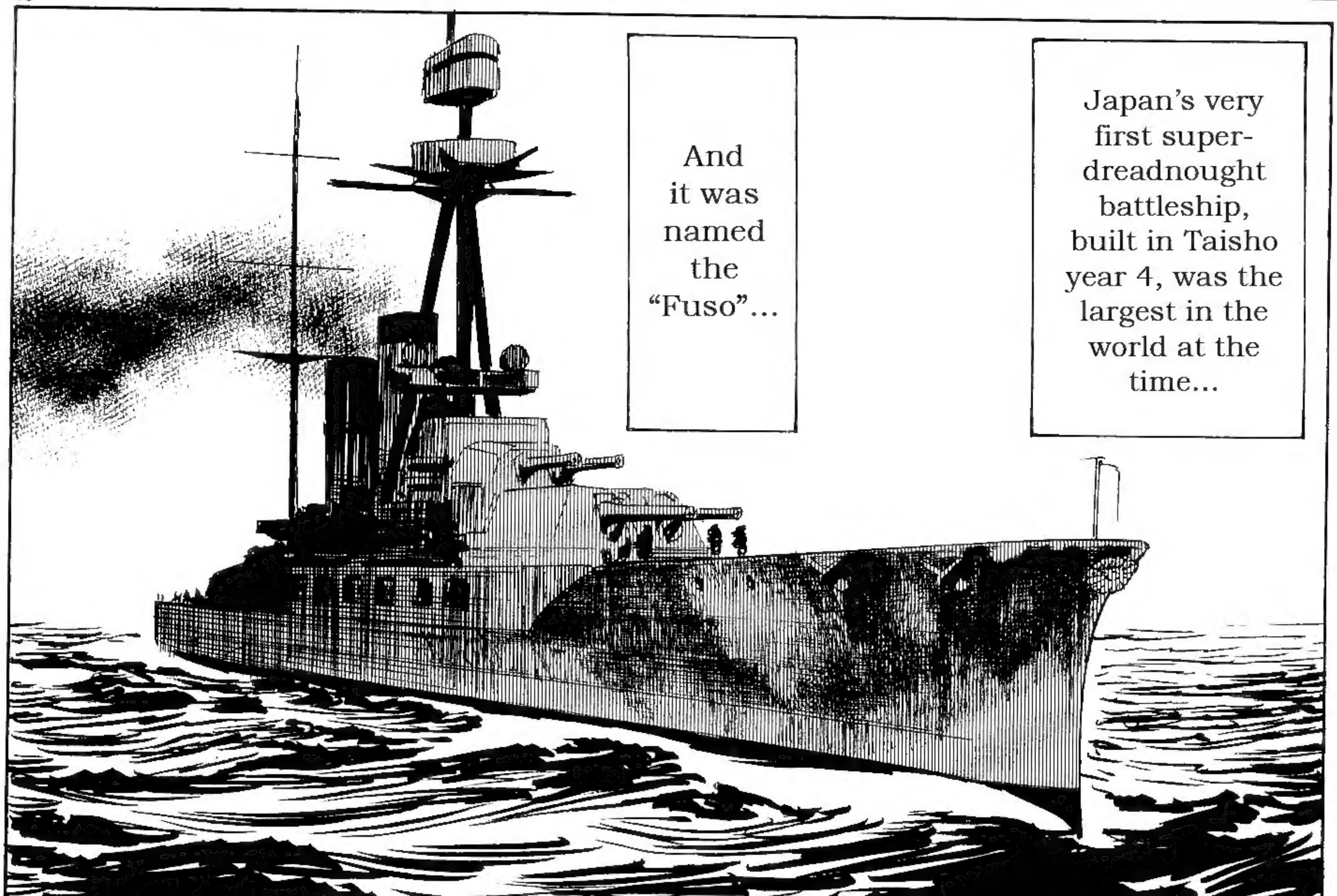
Priest Meigetsu said that he wanted to cross the sea to China, and show it to the people there.

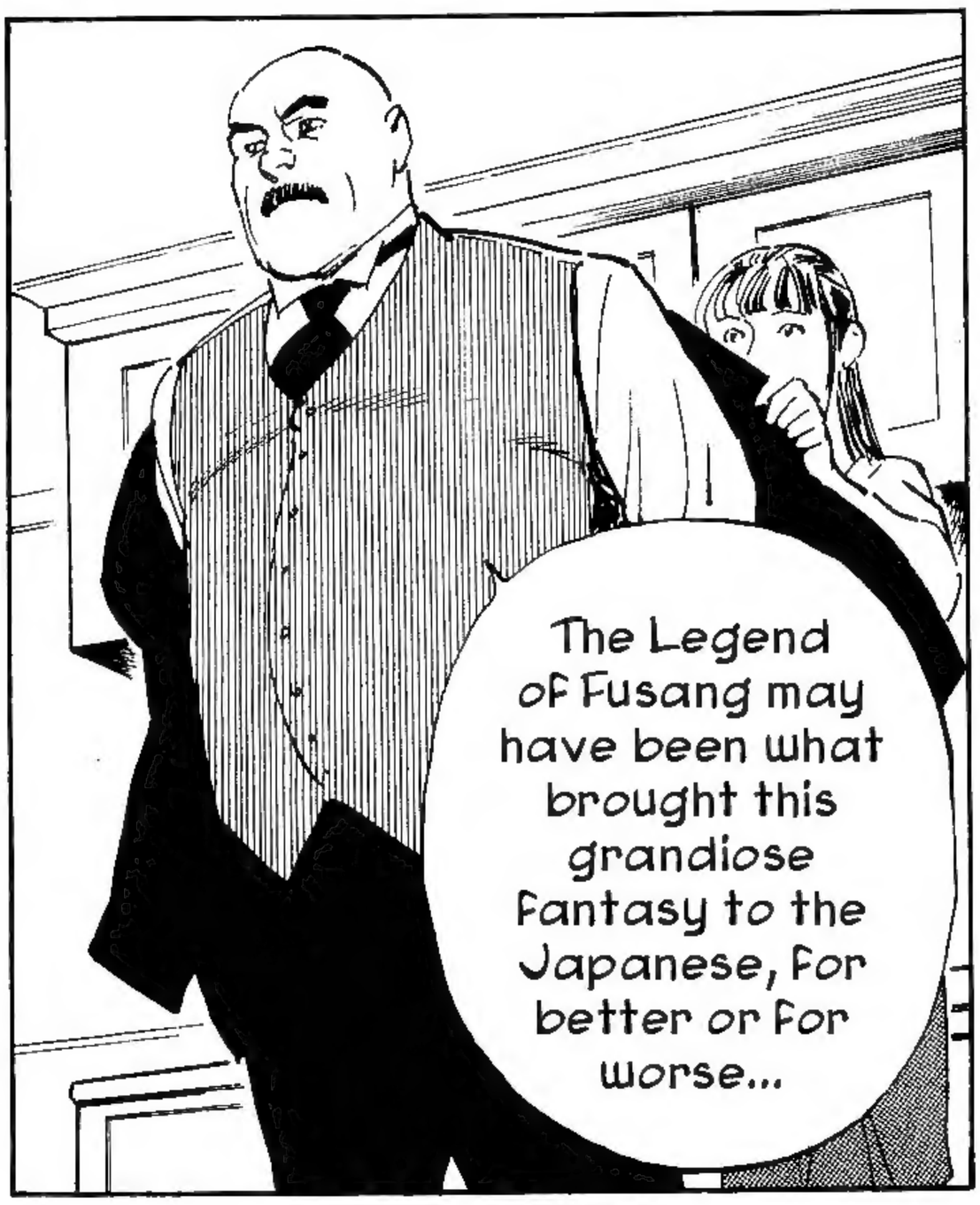
It was a relic of the ancient Tree of Fusang, discovered in his homeland of Iyo (Ehime).

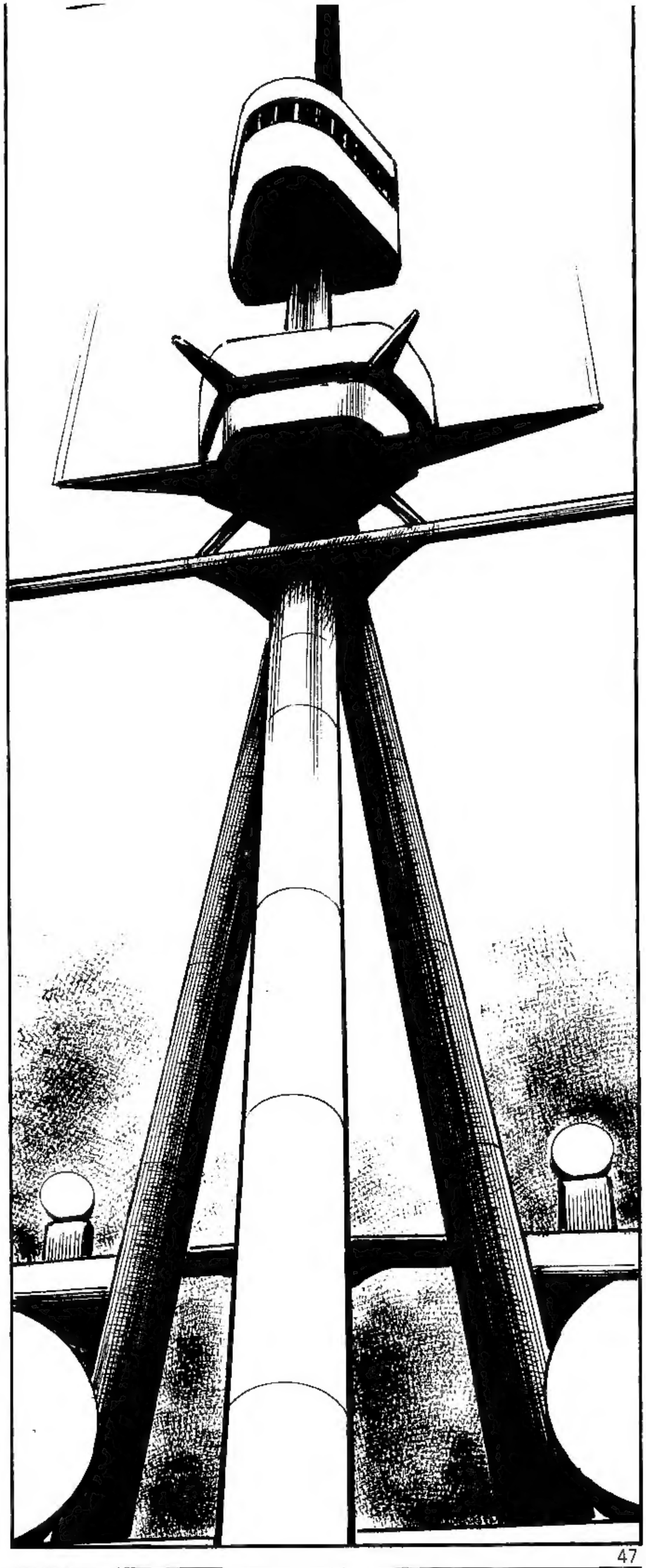
Fusang is mentioned in the Classic of Mountains and Seas, the Huinanzi, and the Classic of the Great Wilderness. In the ancient world, there was an endlessly tall tree which cast a great shadow. In the morning, this shadow would darken the land to the west of it, and in the evening, the sun could not be seen to the east of it. This tree was named Fusang, and the land where it stood was called the Kingdom of Fusang. It has long been said in Japan and China that this land is Japan.

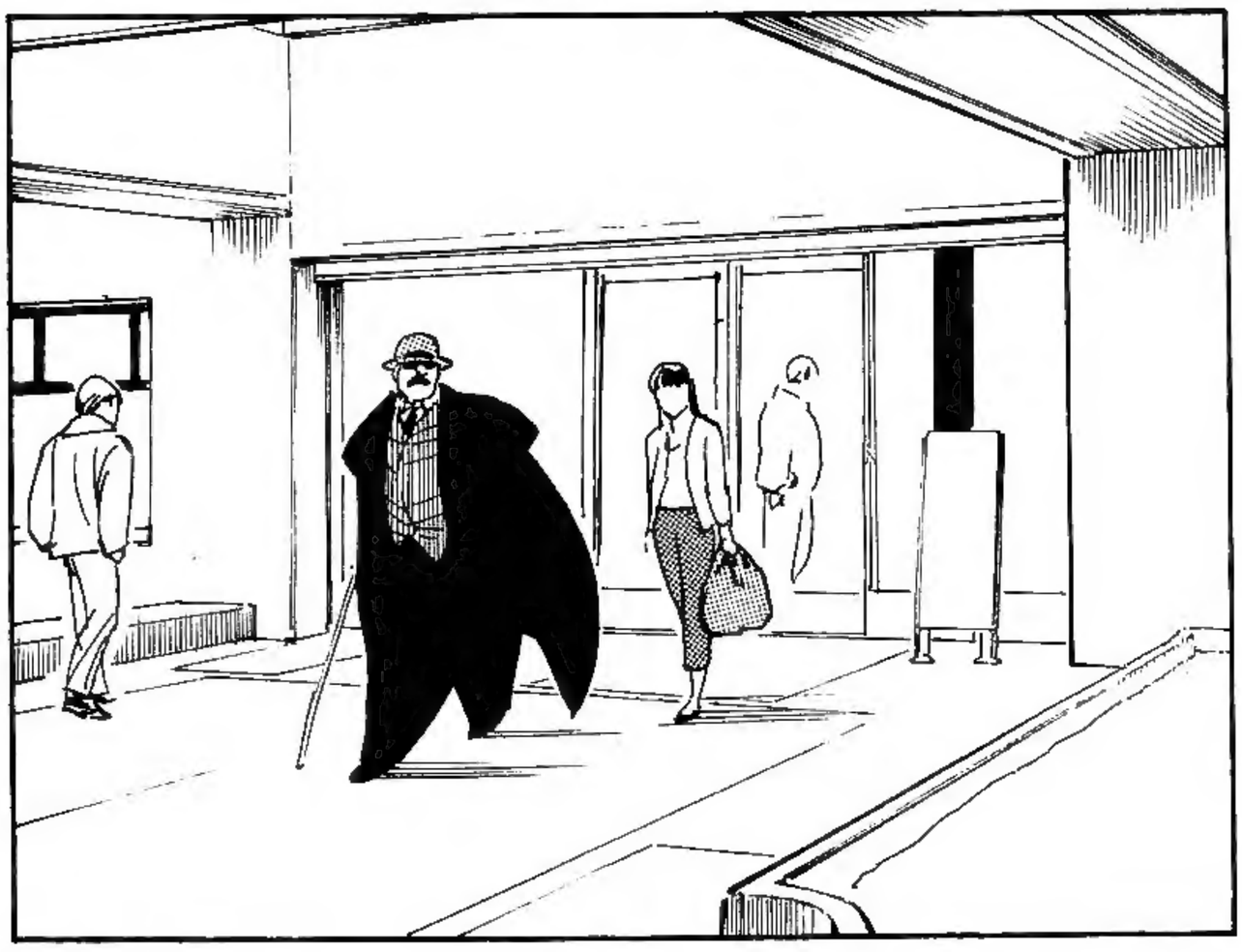


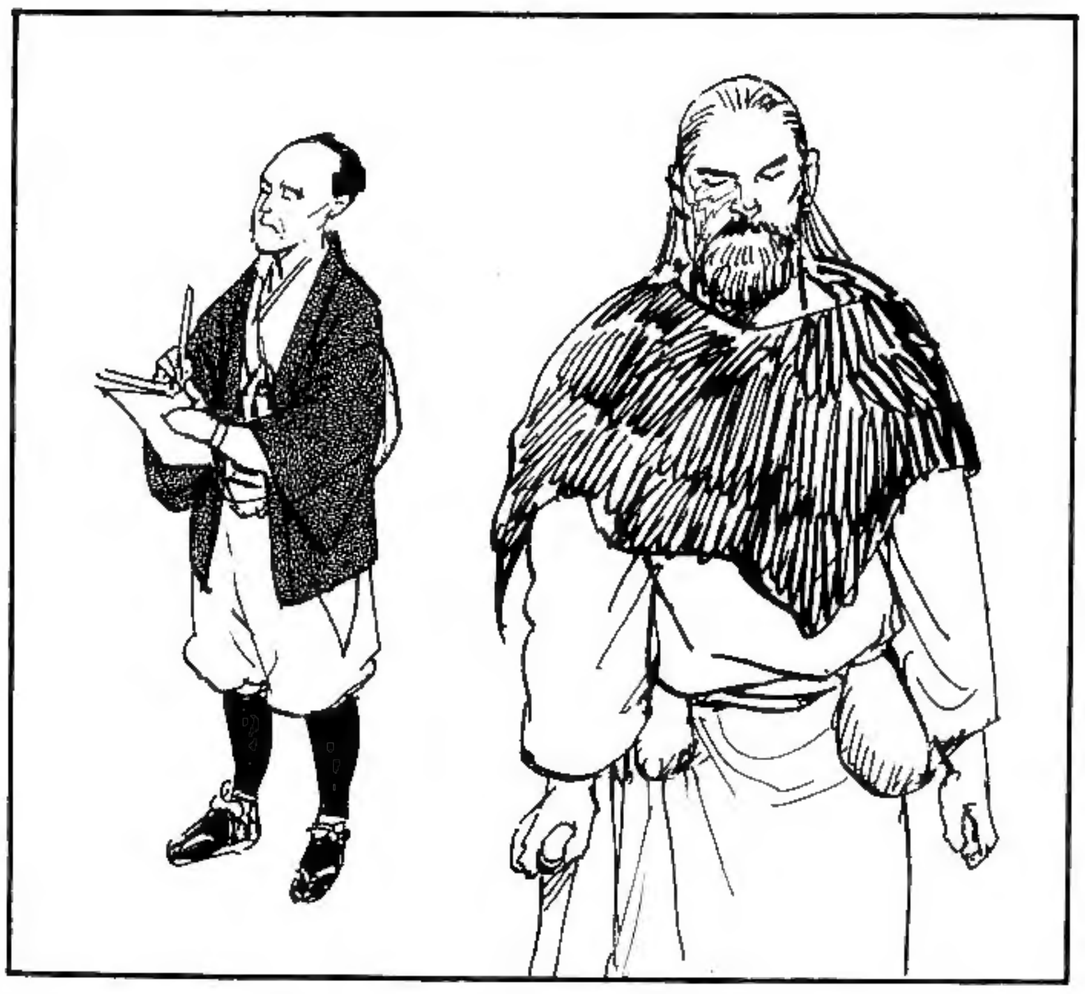
Not stopping at making Fusang another name for Japan, this may have planted an aspiration for all things gigantic in their national consciousness.
A giant tree disproportionate to the small island nation... This grandiose legend may have appealed to the hearts of the Japanese.

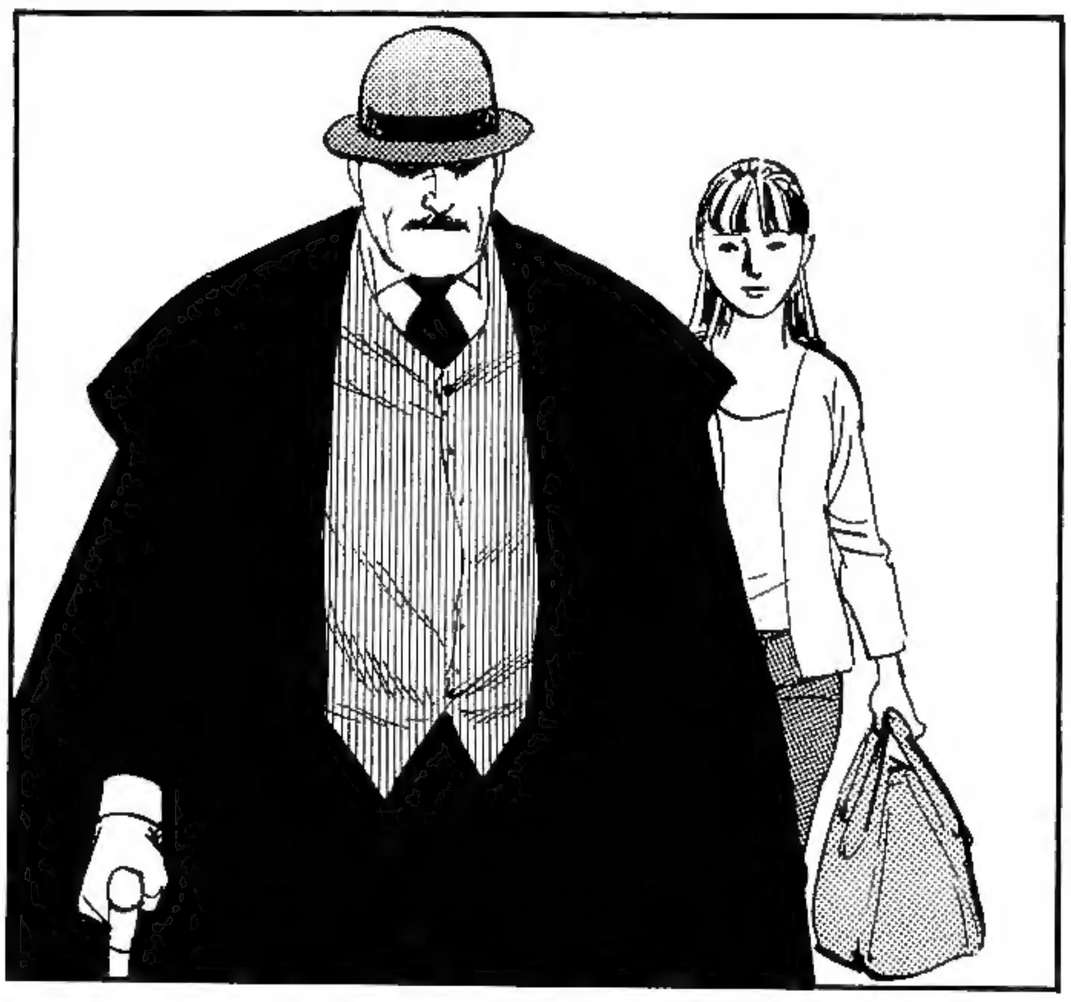

And it was named the “Fuso”...
Japan’s very first super-dreadnought battleship, built in Taisho year 4, was the largest in the world at the time...

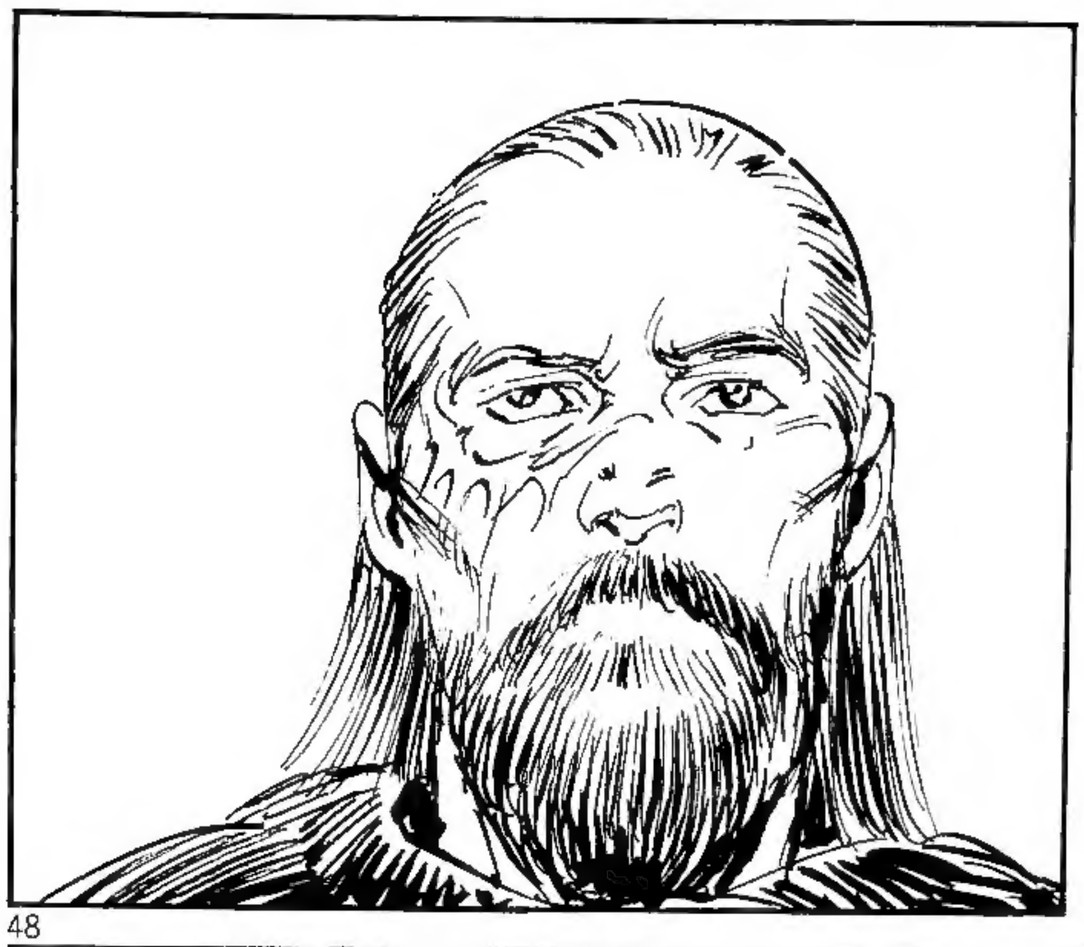

The Legend of Fusang may have been what brought this grandiose Fantasy to the Japanese, for better or for worse...

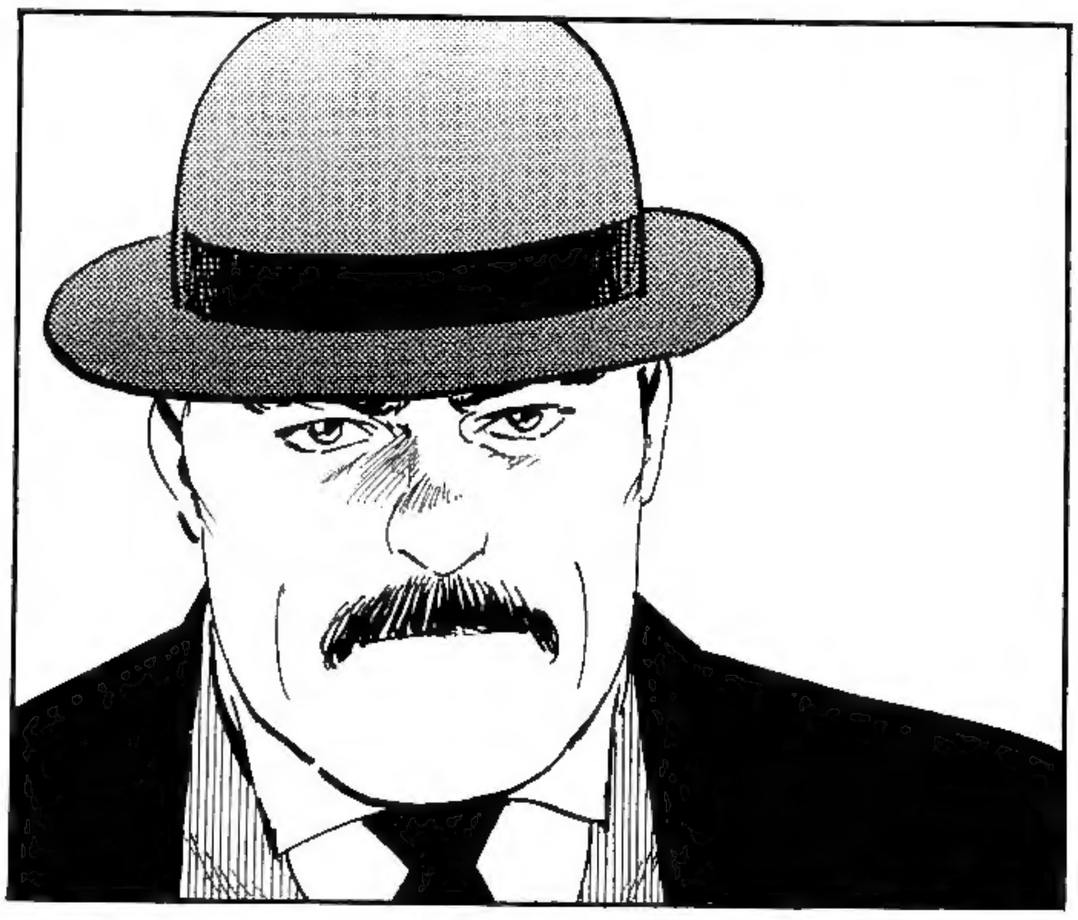


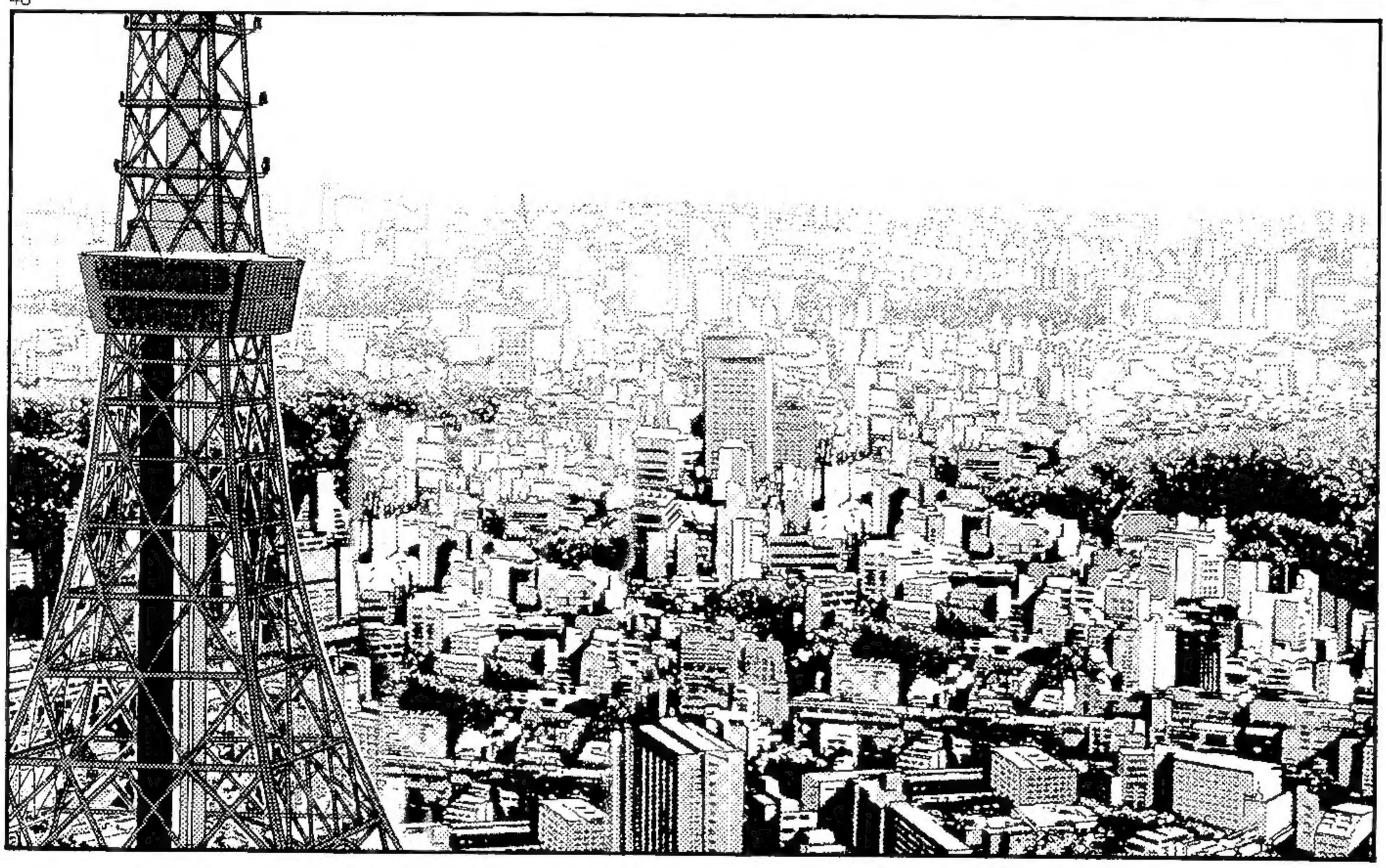












THE CASE BOOKS OF PROFESSOR MUNAKATA

CHAPTER 33
PRESENTED BY
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